



# Reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training in Wales

Delivering Skills that Work for Wales



# Reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training in Wales

- Audience** All bodies concerned with education and training in Wales, Heads of Primary and Secondary Schools, Local Education Authorities, 14-19 Networks, Children and Young People's Partnerships, Keeping in Touch Partnerships, Extending Entitlement /Youth Support Services/ Young People's Partnerships, statutory and voluntary Youth Service, Estyn, Further Education Colleges, Work Based Learning /training providers, employer organisations and forums, Trades Unions, Sector Skills Councils, Jobcentre Plus, Careers Wales, Voluntary and Community organisations, Prison and Probation Services, Youth Offending Teams, Children's Commissioner for Wales, WLGA, the Department for Work and Pensions, Police.
- Overview** This document sets out the Welsh Assembly Government's strategic approach to reducing the number of young people aged 16-18 not in education, employment or training (NEET) in Wales. It is part of a series of themed papers which address skills issues identified in "Skills that Work for Wales", the skills and employment strategy. The document also relates to the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure.
- Action required** This publication is for information and will be followed up by further dialogue with providers and other stakeholders. Comments or questions on its contents are welcome and should be directed to the contacts listed below.
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This document is also available on the Welsh Assembly Government's website at: <http://new.wales.gov.uk/>
- Related documents** One Wales  
The Learning Country: Vision into Action  
Skills that Work for Wales  
Shared Planning for Better Outcomes WAG circular 31/2007  
Extending Entitlement: services and support for 11-25 year olds in Wales  
Promise and Performance – the independent review on the mission and purpose of further education  
Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure  
Inclusion and Pupil Support WAG circular 47/2006  
School Effectiveness Framework



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## Ministerial Foreword



The number of young people aged 16-18 who are not in education employment or training (NEET) matters. For some of these young people, the time they spend outside of education, employment or training will have a significant negative impact on their future lives - affecting their ability to compete for jobs and earn a good living, as well as their levels of health, motivation and self-esteem. This, in turn, has an impact on all of us.

Since devolution, we have made progress. A range of activity has contributed to reducing the numbers of young people who are NEET in Wales. But we can not afford to be complacent. 10% of young people who are NEET still means more than 12,000 individuals, very many of whom are not engaged in a positive form of activity. That is unacceptable.

*Skills that Work for Wales* sets out our skills and employment vision. It is a hugely challenging agenda, and one which is of direct relevance to young people who are NEET and those who are at high risk of becoming so. Without concerted action now to ensure that these young people have sufficient skills to enable them to compete successfully for jobs, they are likely to face a future characterised by worklessness and the consequential social, economic and health-related disadvantages.

To maximise participation in learning beyond the age of 16, our vision, as set out in *One Wales*, is to transform learning provision for young people by providing attractive, flexible learning options matched by enhanced support and guidance. Our proposed Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure will make this a statutory entitlement for learners who are in maintained schools or FE colleges. We believe that by increasing the quantity and quality of the options available to young people, this will motivate them to continue with their learning and training and help them to achieve their full potential.

This document, with associated action plan, sets out the agenda for the future of young people who are NEET.

This document is published at a time of economic downturn that could affect our young people, along with everyone else. But the issues around young people who are NEET are not likely to change and we believe that our actions to reduce the number of young people who are NEET remain valid both in the current economic climate and when the upturn comes.

I would like to thank the many people and organisations who responded to our consultation document, *“Delivering Skills that Work for Wales: Proposals to reduce the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training in Wales”* (May 2008).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Griffiths AM', written in a cursive style.

**John Griffiths AM**  
Deputy Minister for Skills

## Executive Summary

### What's in a name?

In the context of an improving labour market situation in Wales, the proportion of young people aged 16-18 not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET) has remained at a relatively consistent level - at around 10 -12%, or 12, 000 young people, for nearly a decade.

Our analysis shows us that young people who are categorised as NEET are a diverse group: some of them are taking planned breaks in their education or labour market careers - perhaps on a gap year - and will not need help to re-engage in learning or work. Others might have significant and multiple barriers to participation - domestic responsibilities or an insecure home environment; substance misuse problems; or a history of offending behaviour. Our policy responses need to take account of the different needs of the individual young people whom we group together under the catch-all term 'NEET'.

We know that young people who have disengaged from school, regularly played truant, have low basic skills levels, or have achieved no or low qualifications are at greatest risk of a damaging period spent NEET. Being male and having a statement of special educational needs increases that risk. This suggests that measures to make learning environments more attractive; to increase attendance; to improve literacy and numeracy; and to boost attainment are likely to have the biggest long-term affect in preventing young people becoming NEET down the line.

That is why we are investing so heavily in preventative work in Wales through the School Effectiveness Framework (SEF). The School Effectiveness Framework aligns these programmes, helping to improve learning and well-being outcomes for children and young people. It looks at inclusion initiatives like the Parenting Action Plan; the Basic Skills Strategy; Communities First; the Wales Spatial Plan; and the Childcare Strategy, also linking to our Flying Start and Foundation Phase Programmes.

We also need, however, to make sure that support exists for those young people who need it right now.

### Our action for reducing the number of young people aged 16-18 who are NEET

This is a complex agenda - there are no simple solutions. What is important is that we make use of all available tools in an integrated way; that the quality of our provision is as good as it can be; and that provision is aligned to what our young people actually need.

We want to ensure that as many young people as possible choose to stay in learning post-16 and progress to sustained employment. Rather than introduce

compulsory learning beyond the age of 16, our vision is to transform learning provision for young people, by providing broader, more flexible learning options, matched by enhanced support and guidance.

We need to make changes ensuring that we have:

- truly worked in a “tri-level” way, listening and responding to our partners in local government, schools and the post-16 sector. We will base changes on evidence from all three levels, shaping an effective strategy for intervention and support that recognises all our roles;
- provision that works effectively within the School Effectiveness Framework (SEF) and the Quality Effectiveness Framework (QEF);
- efficient processes for identifying and re-engaging young people who become NEET;
- a full range of learning options to meet demand;
- effective learning support and careers advice and guidance, so that young people are given the knowledge and skills to access appropriate education, training or employment;
- perhaps most importantly for many young people who are NEET, targeted and intensive personal support, to enable young people to overcome significant and sometimes multiple barriers to participation.

We set out in this document how we will strengthen these key strands of activity. Good partnership working at a local level is needed to bring the strands together. The role of the Children and Young People’s Partnerships is central in providing the leadership needed for effective co-operation across providers to meet the needs of the vulnerable and also to action the joint strategic priorities set out in their Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP).

## **The right systems**

We know there is a correlation between reducing the numbers of young people who are NEET and the use of effective systems which engage and track them. It is essential that we develop further the intelligence mapping and monitoring systems, using that information to examine the overall position and to record new entrants and leavers.

We will improve local data sharing by enhancing the Keeping in Touch (KIT) protocols. The protocols will set out how Young People’s Partnership (YPP) organisations will identify, engage, assess and refer young people who are NEET. We will also develop a stronger role for Careers Wales companies, in collaboration with YPPs, in driving forward action to reduce the proportion of young people who are NEET.

Collaboration between partners and partnerships involved in reducing the proportion of young people who are NEET will be improved through the

processes identified in the SEF. Our vision is one of a collaborative system that shares 'what works' openly, for the benefit of all children and young people. Young People's Partnerships and Children and Young People's Partnerships have a statutory responsibility for co-ordinating services and provision for young people aged 0-25 in their locality. We recommend that the partnerships work with the Welsh Assembly Government in allocating a lead partner with particular responsibility for young people (aged 16-18) who are NEET.

## **The right provision**

We know that most young people who are NEET say that it is because the right learning provision or employment opportunities are not available, or that they do not have the qualifications to progress. The central part of our response to the NEET issue, therefore, has to focus on trying to engage young people more effectively in learning by offering them a wider choice of options as to what and how they study as they move through their education, and on making sure that their choices give them the skills they need to progress into sustained employment.

We will legislate to place a duty upon local education authorities, schools and further education institutions to co-operate in the delivery of a local options menu for young people and of an enhanced entitlement for learners to the options, experiences and support that are part of their learning pathway. This legislation will align to the central SEF theme of 'equality' and will strengthen the work of agencies within the SEF element, 'working with others'.

We will test an employability programme which will focus on tackling the significant additional support needs that many young people who are NEET have before they are able to move closer to the labour market.

## **The right support**

Most young people, supported by parents, friends and school or college, can manage the transition from childhood to adulthood successfully. But for some, this support, for whatever reason, is simply not available, or not used. Bespoke solutions, involving more intensive support and guidance, are often required, given the multiple challenges that many young people who are NEET face.

We will develop further an enhanced model for Learning Coach support, specifically for NEET and potentially NEET young people. We will also be developing new guidance and enhancing current guidance, together with improved approaches for the delivery of personal support. This action will be significant in attempting to overcome the complex additional needs that many young people who are NEET have. We are considering the scope for, and benefits of, a statutory entitlement to free basic skills learning for all post-16 learners, and have worked closely with the Department for Work and Pensions, so that in the reformed jobseeking regime, young people aged 18 with a history of being NEET can be fast-tracked into the latter stages of the flexible New Deal, on its introduction in April 2009.



## Chapter One: What's in a Name?

### What does 'NEET' mean and why does it matter?

1.1 In literal terms, NEET is a statistical category relating to a group of young people aged 16-18 who are not engaged in any form of education, employment or training. In practice, however, the term is often used more generally to describe young people who are disaffected, or who have disengaged from learning and employment, and who may also be increasingly marginalised from society.

1.2 One of the reasons that the NEET issue has featured so prominently on the public agenda in recent years is that the proportion of young people in Wales not engaged in some form of education, employment or training aged 16-18 has remained at a relatively consistent level - at around 10-12%, or 12,000 young people, for nearly a decade.

1.3 The picture in the rest of the UK is similar. In Scotland<sup>1</sup>, the proportion of 16-19 year olds who are NEET has ranged between 12 -15% since 1996. In England<sup>2</sup>, over a similar period, the proportion has fluctuated between 8 to 10% with the latest figures showing 9.4% of young people aged 16-18 being NEET.

1.4 In this document, we have concentrated on 16 and 17 year-olds, because these are the most vulnerable. There are people who are NEET at all ages, but 16 and 17 year-olds are particularly significant, because they lie between the period of compulsory education and of eligibility for the main welfare benefits. Young people at this age are therefore at risk of being invisible to statutory and other agencies.

1.5 So why does it matter if some young people are NEET? A number of studies<sup>3</sup> have looked at the effects that a period of youth inactivity can have on an individual's life outcomes. These effects include the direct costs of lost income from employment, as well as the impacts that a period of inactivity may have on an individual's levels of health, motivation and self-esteem. There is also evidence of a long-term "scarring"<sup>4</sup> effect linked to an early period of inactivity, which may lead to further periods of worklessness as an adult.

1.6 Attempts have been made to estimate the financial costs of extended periods of NEET status. These costs are high. A study by the former DfES, published in 2002<sup>5</sup>, estimated that the additional resource cost associated with being NEET amounted to £97,000<sup>6</sup> per person, over a lifetime.

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<sup>1</sup> Scottish Executive <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Labour-Market/TrendNEET>

<sup>2</sup> Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16-18 Year Olds in England: 2007, SFR13/2008, DfES

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/links/doi/10.1111/14680297.00666/abs/>; <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/Depts/CMPO/workingpapers/wp97.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

<sup>5</sup> Estimating the cost of being 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' at age 16 to 18 DfES Research Report RR346

<sup>6</sup> 2000/01 prices

1.7 The estimate attempts to place a value on the additional costs of unemployment; under-employment; crime; poor health; substance misuse; premature death; and early motherhood. So, in Wales, the costs of failing to help 12,000<sup>7</sup> NEET young people aged 16-18 out of NEET status over their lifetime would amount to well over £1 billion.

## How many young people are NEET in Wales?

1.8 If we are to target our action effectively to reduce the size of the NEET cohort in Wales, we need to know more about who they are.

1.9 This is more complicated than it sounds. None of our existing sets of data will allow us to put together a comprehensive picture of the people who make up the NEET group. The measure used nationally in Wales to report the number of young people who are NEET<sup>8</sup> is not able to provide us with any detail on who those young people actually are. Neither does it allow for the production of local area statistics, limiting the extent to which the data can be used to target interventions, or to measure their impact.

1.10 The main source of local data - the Careers Wales Destination Survey<sup>9</sup> - is likely to underestimate the number of young people who are NEET, since it surveys only leavers from schools; in other words, not all young people are included.

1.11 However, from the data we already have, we can attempt to gain a fuller understanding of the make-up of the NEET group, and from that, target our action at those members of it who need additional levels of support.

1.12 Figure 1 shows us that over the period 1997 to 2005, the proportion of young people who are NEET in Wales has ranged between 10-12%, with the latest figures<sup>10</sup> showing 9.8% of 16-18 year olds<sup>11</sup> who are NEET.

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<sup>7</sup> See paragraph 1.28 where we demonstrate that not all young people will need additional support to move out of NEET status. We estimate that approximately 6500 of the 16-18 NEET cohort will need help to re-engage

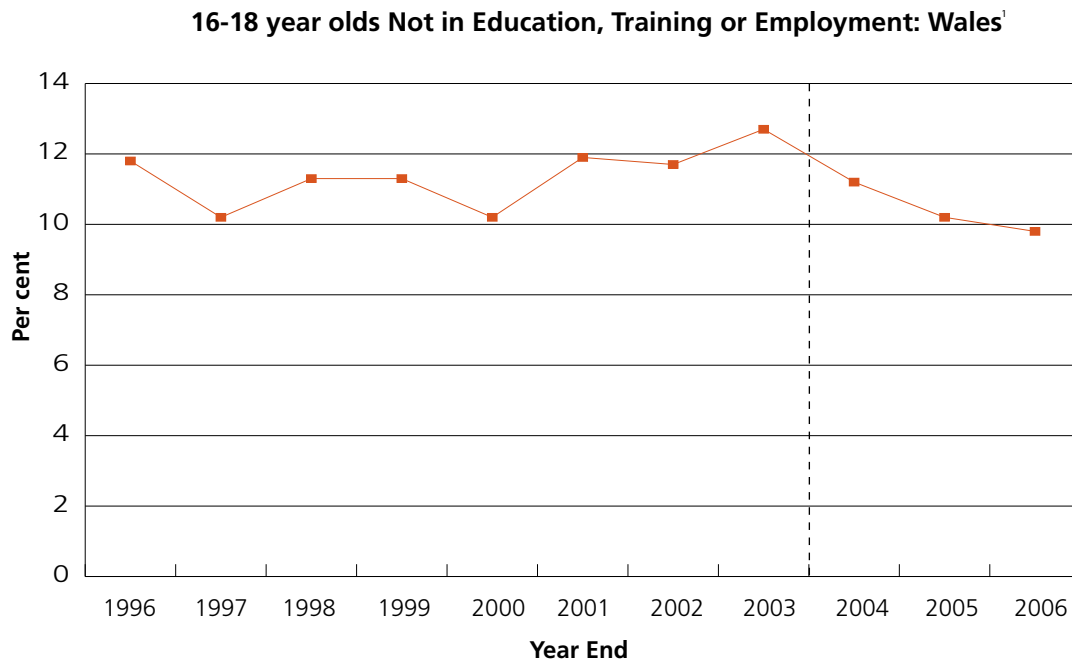
<sup>8</sup> Participation of young people in education and the labour market (Year end 2005), WAG 2007. Subtracting known data from population statistics to leave a remainder or residual of young people who are classed as NEET. A similar method is used in England allowing us to make cross-border comparisons. An alternative approach is to use the Annual Population Survey as currently done in Scotland. This method will lead to comparable estimates across the whole of the UK

<sup>9</sup> Pupil Destinations from Schools in Wales, 2007. The Destination Survey was developed as an aid to careers services in identifying transition trends; it was not designed to be a comprehensive database detailing young peoples' status 'in real time'

<sup>10</sup> Participation of young people in education and the labour market (Year end 2006), WAG 2008

<sup>11</sup> This relates to age at the start of the academic year; thus the 16-18 year age group covers the three years after the end of compulsory schooling

**Figure 1**



<sup>1</sup> Estimates for 2004 and 2005 were revised in July 2008, due to the re-weighting of the Labour Force Survey in line with latest population estimates. Estimates for years prior to 2004 have not yet been revised, so data from 2004 onwards is not directly comparable.

*Source: Statistical Directorate, Welsh Assembly Government*

1.13 Survey sample sizes are too small to analyse the NEET group in Wales by gender, by individual year, so Figure 2 shows us the percentage of males and females who are NEET, averaged over the three years 2005-2007. The graph illustrates that there is a higher proportion of young men who are NEET than young women.

1.14 Figure 2 also shows us the percentage of 16, 17 and 18 year olds who are NEET, averaged over the three years 2005-2007<sup>12</sup>. It shows us that the percentage of young people who are NEET at 17 and 18 years old is significantly higher than at 16 years old. This suggests that the sustainability of destinations after compulsory education is at least part of the problem, alongside the transition from compulsory education itself.

1.15 Possible reasons for greater numbers of 17 and 18 year olds being NEET include parenthood and caring responsibilities; health issues; custodial sentences; and a drop-off in learning participation. It might also be the case that the lower proportion of people who are NEET at the age of 16 masks underlying inactivity, with a number of young people marginally engaged in education simply for something to do.

<sup>12</sup> Sample sizes are again too small to analyse NEET by single year of age in Wales

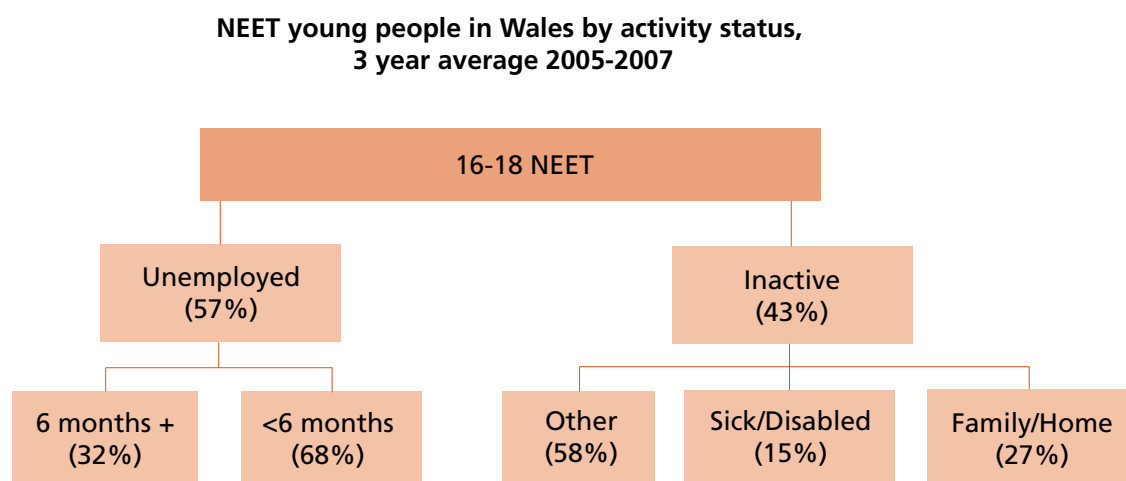
**Figure 2**



Source: Annual Population Survey 2005-2007 (ONS)

1.16 Figure 3 provides us with a breakdown of the headline figures of young people who are NEET in Wales, by activity status. It shows us that nearly 7 out of 10 of the group are either unemployed or inactive and want to work, while just over 4 out of 10 of the inactive are sick or disabled, or have family or caring responsibilities.

**Figure 3**



Source: Annual Population Survey 2005-2007 (ONS)

1.17 These headline figures are useful in providing us with a broad picture of the NEET group, but we also need to identify the more specific characteristics of NEET young people, which should determine the priorities for government intervention.

1.18 Although, as we have seen, the proportion of young people who are NEET in Wales has remained fairly stable over time, research shows us that the make-up of that group has not stayed the same. There are flows of young people into and out of NEET status - commonly referred to as the 'revolving door', or NEET 'churn.' Understanding the rate of churn is important, because research<sup>13</sup> tells us that it is both the frequency of NEET spells experienced by a young person and/or the overall duration of NEET status (with 3 months commonly cited as significant) that can impact negatively on a young person's future.

**Figure 4: Change in status of young people NEET**

Of those young people NEET in 2007 <sup>1</sup>			
Remained NEET in 2008		Moved out of NEET in 2008	
52%		48%	
<i>Unemployed</i>	<i>Inactive</i>	<i>Into Employment Only</i>	<i>Into Education<sup>2</sup></i>
24%	28%	26%	22%

<sup>1</sup> NEET in 2007 in this table includes those who are inactive or unemployed but also in part-time education.

<sup>2</sup> Includes those in employment and education.

*Source: Labour Force Survey, Spring 2008.  
Due to small sample sizes, this analysis is UK level.  
Percentages may not tally due to rounding.*

1.19 Figure 4 shows us that, for the UK as a whole:

- of those young people NEET in 2007, 52% remained NEET in 2008 and 48% moved into employment or education;
- of those that remained NEET, a higher proportion were inactive compared with unemployed;
- of those that moved out of NEET status in 2007, a higher proportion were in employment only, rather than education.

1.20 This is important for several reasons. It shows us that the NEET group is dynamic, with only a proportion of the cohort remaining NEET over time<sup>14</sup>. Indeed, it shows us that approximately half of young people who experience NEET status over the course of a year engage with employment, education or training at some point during that time, even if only for periods of short duration. This suggests that we need to improve the *sustainability of the employment, education or training options for those young people*.

<sup>13</sup> Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training: an Analysis of the Scottish School Leavers Survey, Linda Croxford and David Raffe, Edinburgh 2000

<sup>14</sup> The Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (PMDU 2005) estimate that just 1 per cent of those NEET at 16 remain so from 16 to 18

## Characteristics of young people who become NEET

1.21 Ensuring that our interventions are targeted effectively means drilling down further to the characteristics and circumstances of those young people who are most likely to be NEET. Research<sup>15</sup> highlights a number of factors linked to a young person's behaviour and personal circumstances that are associated with an increased likelihood of becoming NEET.

### *Attendance and attainment at school*

1.22 NEET young people are likely to have a history of not attending school and to report higher rates of persistent truancy during Years 10 and 11 (15.4%) than young people in general (3.3%)<sup>16</sup>. In addition, young people NEET are over three times more likely to have been excluded from school than young people overall<sup>17</sup>.

1.23 Research has shown that in some areas, young people who are NEET are up to eight times more likely to have a statutory statement of special educational needs (SEN) and are up to fourteen times more likely to have school action plus status<sup>18</sup>.

1.24 Figure 5 shows us that NEET young people are much more likely to have no or low qualification levels than the population as a whole. Indeed, 31% of young people in the NEET cohort have no qualifications, in comparison with only 7% of the non-NEET population. Similarly, 34% of NEET young people have only low level qualifications (below NQF level 2) compared with 21% of the non-NEET population.

**Figure 5: Highest qualification held by 16 to 18 year olds in Wales, 3 year average 2005-07**

Qualification Level	Per cent		
	NEET	Non-NEET	All
No qualifications	31	7	10
Below NQF Level 2	34	21	23
NQF Level 2	25	51	47
NQF Level 3 and above	10	21	20

Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding

Source: Annual Population Survey 2005 - 2007 (ONS)

<sup>15</sup> Payne J (2000) youth cohort study: Education, training and employment of 16-18 Year olds in England and the factors associated with non-participation. <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b000162/sb02-2000.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> ibid

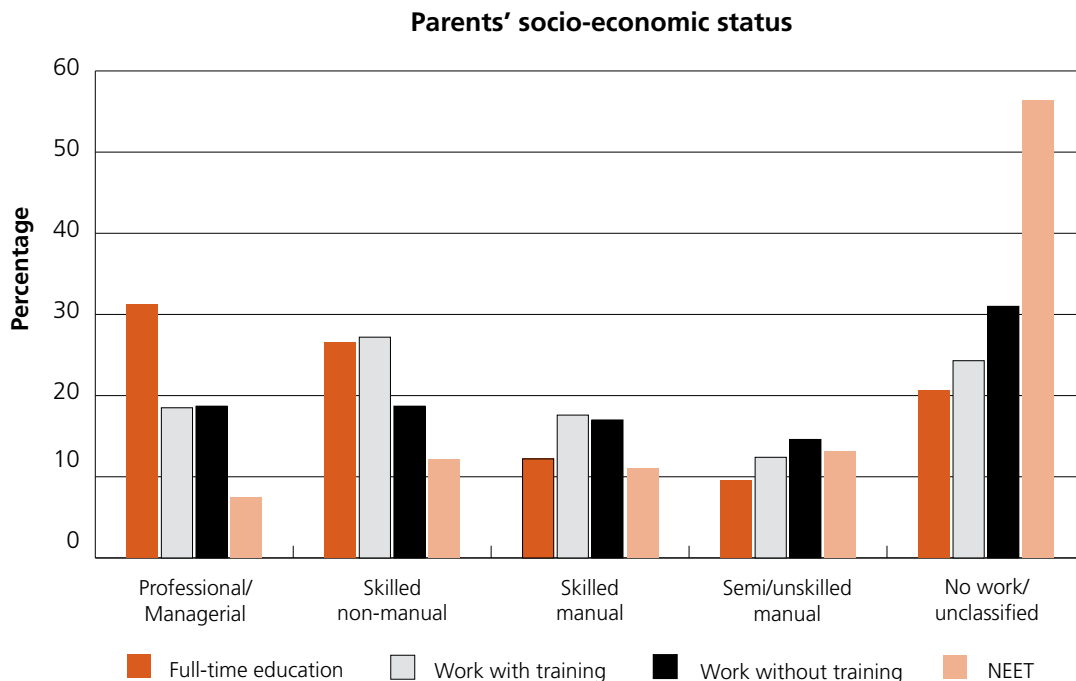
<sup>17</sup> ibid

<sup>18</sup> Cordis Bright, Research into post-16s who are NEET in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan, July 2007

### Parents' socio-economic status

1.25 Data collected at the end of compulsory schooling<sup>19</sup> shows that young people who are NEET are more likely to come from workless backgrounds. Around one in four of all young people are from workless households, compared to over half of young people in the NEET group. Figure 6 appears to demonstrate that the nature of parents' work has less influence on whether a young person is NEET, than whether his or her parents work at all.

**Figure 6**



1.26 We can see from this analysis that household worklessness and disengagement from education are likely to be two of the main factors relating to NEET status. There are also a number of individual circumstances and barriers which are strong indicators of potential NEET status:

- In 2007-08, the average external qualifications point score for Looked After 16 year olds was 123, compared with 342 for all 16 year olds<sup>20</sup>. 50% of care leavers are NEET on their 19th birthday<sup>21</sup>.
- NEET young people are twice as likely to have caring responsibilities, compared to other young people. Evidence<sup>22</sup> suggests that caring responsibilities prevent nearly one in ten of the NEET group from staying on at school, compared with only one in twenty young people overall.

<sup>19</sup> Education Maintenance Allowance Pilot database - data relates to England

<sup>20</sup> Local Government Data Unit ~ Wales National Performance Indicators

<sup>21</sup> Local Government Data Unit ~ Wales Care Leavers on their 19th Birthday

<sup>22</sup> Payne J (2000) youth cohort study: Education, training and employment of 16-18 Year olds in England and the factors associated with non-participation. <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b000162/sb02-2000.pdf>

- The Millennium Cohort Survey (MCS) provides information on teenage mothers and NEET status<sup>23</sup>. At the time of the first survey, 84% of teenage mothers in Wales who were under 21 were NEET. This compared to 46% of older mothers.
- A Youth Justice Board study of young offenders in England and Wales found that 80% did not have five or more GCSEs A\*-C, and that 80% were not in full-time education at the time of their arrest<sup>24</sup>.

1.27 Small sample sizes in Wales mean that it is difficult to assess the extent to which different ethnic groups are more or less likely to become NEET. What we have demonstrated is that there is a link between low attainment at school and an increased likelihood of a NEET outcome. Linked to this, we know that some pupil cohorts under-perform in school - white males in some areas, for example, and certain minority ethnic groups - and are therefore at increased risk of becoming NEET down the line. The most vulnerable group of all in this regard are Gypsy Traveller young people. Both the Welsh Assembly Government's Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant and its Specific Grant for the Education of Travellers aim to improve academic success among these client groups and, thus, their training and employment prospects.

1.28 From our analysis in this section, it is possible for us to approach a broad categorisation of the NEET group, along the lines of a continuum representing the level of seriousness or entrenchment in NEET status:

- a) core NEET - those with social and behavioural problems, or other more complex needs, including those who come from families where worklessness is an accepted norm
- b) floating or 'at-risk' NEET - young people who lack direction and motivation, and tend to have spells of being NEET in between attending school or further education courses, or engaging in low-paid, low-skilled employment, with little or no training opportunities, can and mostly do have the problems/barriers listed in a) but perhaps at different levels meaning they are more willing to engage with support
- c) transition/gap year NEET - those young people who have chosen to take time out before progressing to further or higher education opportunities and are likely to return to education, training or employment, but it is not always clear when this will occur. Such 'transition periods' are often short-term and mean that NEET status for this group is a relatively benign experience, not requiring government intervention.

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<sup>23</sup> Using the definition of a teenage mother as a mother of the Millennium cohort child who was no older than 20 at the time of the first interview almost all of whom would have been teenagers at the time of the cohort birth

<sup>24</sup> Youth Justice Board, 2002

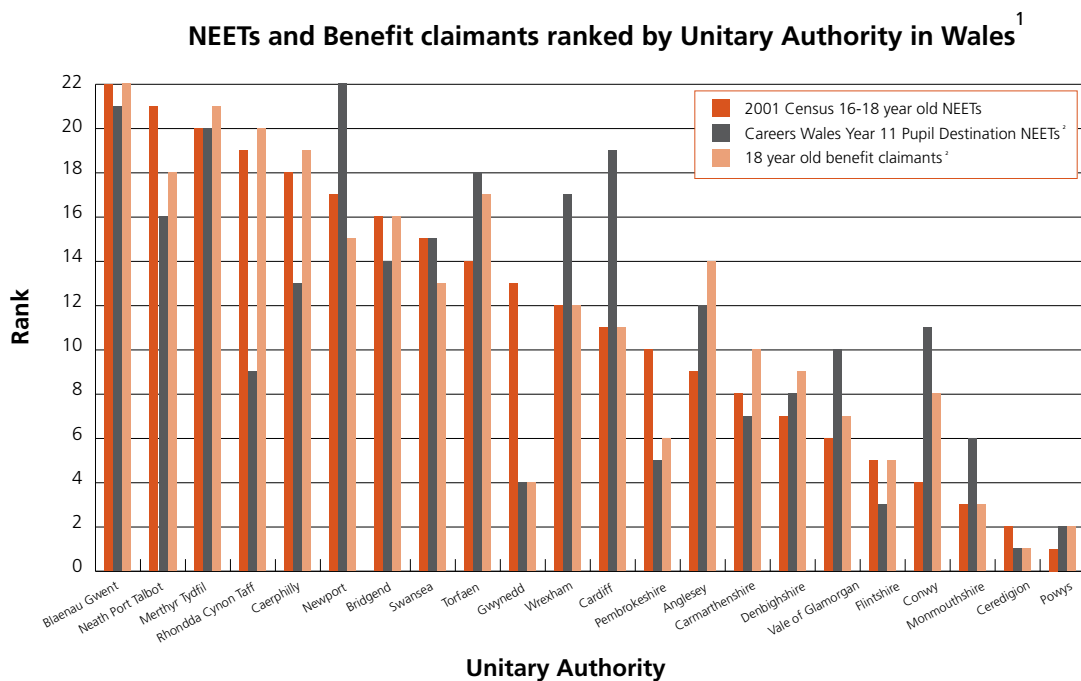


1.29 From this analysis, we can see that the number of young people who are NEET in Wales who require significant additional intervention in order to progress towards the labour market is likely to be considerably fewer than the headline figure taken from national statistics. Taking the features identified above as a starting point, we can use the Annual Population Survey (APS) to estimate the proportion of young people who are unemployed for six months or more, and those who are classed as inactive and require support. On this basis, we can estimate that there are around 6,500 young people who are NEET in Wales who require additional support in order to engage with the labour market and to sustain that engagement once there<sup>25</sup>. We can use this figure of 6,500 young people who are NEET and require support as a more meaningful measure from which to monitor the success of our interventions.

### Where are the young people who are NEET in Wales?

1.30 There is significant correlation between the percentage of young people who are NEET in a particular area and the performance of the wider labour market in that area. As Figure 7 shows, a regional ranking of the percentage of 16-18 year olds who are NEET indicates that the local authorities with the highest proportion of young people who are NEET also have some of the highest levels of unemployment and economic inactivity among the adult population.

**Figure 7**



<sup>1</sup> 22 Unitary Authorities are ranked from 1 (best) to 22 (worst) for each measure  
<sup>2</sup> Averaged over the 3 years 2005-2007

Source: Jobcentre Plus Administrative System, Careers Wales, 2001 Centre

<sup>25</sup> Annex A provides more detail on the methodology used to reach this figure

1.31 The table shows that it is possible to identify NEET 'hot-spots' at a unitary authority level, and that these are closely linked to areas suffering from high levels of inactivity and unemployment amongst the adult population. Whilst the graph uses percentages, the actual figures for the number of 16-18 year olds who are NEET range from 222 in Anglesey to 1,177 in Cardiff. Blaenau Gwent has the largest percentage, with 378 individuals, whilst Powys with the lowest percentage has 282 16-18 year olds who are NEET. That is not to say that the issue of young people who are NEET is only a problem in these areas. The evidence<sup>26</sup> also shows that there are small pockets (i.e. wards or housing estates) with high levels of adult worklessness and young people who are NEET in areas of low unemployment and inactivity. This suggests that higher rates of adult economic inactivity and young people experiencing a period of being NEET are not simply associated with a low level of demand for labour.

1.32 We also know that rurality can present barriers to the identification and to the re-engagement of young people who are NEET. Fewer local opportunities, coupled with poor transport links, may see quiet disaffection turning to entrenched NEET status in some rural communities - although the absolute numbers are relatively small.

1.33 Our analysis has shown us that young people who are NEET are more likely to come from a background with one or both parents out of work, and to have left school with few or no educational qualifications. This, alongside other evidence, suggests that there is a generational cycle of periods spent NEET, which may lead to similar periods of inactivity and unemployment as an adult. These patterns appear to affect particular families and specific communities across Wales.

1.34 Such concentrations of disadvantaged people support the need for tightly-focused policy interventions and co-ordinated local action.

## Implications for policy and practice

1.35 Evidence findings:

- Young people who are NEET are a diverse group. Treating them as a single category, merely on the basis of what they are not (i.e. in education, employment or training) is not the best basis for forming policy. Policy interventions need to take account of the different activities and 'characteristics' of young people who are NEET. Those with domestic responsibilities, or with drug or alcohol problems, will require different forms of support from those who are looking for but unable to find suitable employment. Some unemployed young people will require more support to enter work or training than others.

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<sup>26</sup> Cordis Bright, Research into post-16s who are NEET in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan, July 2007

- To this end, a key approach will be one identified throughout the SEF - that of 'tri-level' working'. We will work at national and local government levels with providers and those directly supporting people who are NEET, to ensure that we frame policy and legislation together. In this way, we can ensure that national aspirations will be fit for purpose at the point of delivery.
- It is possible to approach a broad categorisation of the NEET group along the lines of a continuum representing the level of entrenchment in NEET status. Within the continuum, we can see that some young people who are NEET are taking planned breaks in their educational or labour market careers and we do not need to include them in indicators of a policy 'problem', in this context.
- There is a strong family association with being NEET. This indicates that early intervention, locally-focused, and including other household members, is likely to be needed.
- Both the length of time a young person spends NEET and the number of different periods of NEET status they experience are significant factors, necessitating additional intervention.
- Young people who have disengaged from school, played truant, have low basic skills levels, or have achieved no or low qualifications are at greatest risk of becoming NEET. In addition, being male and having a statement of special educational needs increases a young person's chances of experiencing NEET status. This suggests that measures to make school and other learning environments more attractive and effective; to increase attendance; to deal effectively with behavioural problems; to improve literacy and numeracy; and to boost attainment are likely to have a positive long-term effect in preventing young people becoming NEET at a later stage. These factors also provide a means for identifying young people 'at-risk', and for targeting specific interventions. This is consistent with the principles of the School Effectiveness Framework, which commits the educational establishment to early and strategic intervention and support for all learners, which is differentiated and which provides opportunities for accelerated support, where it is needed.
- There is a significant increase in the number of people who are NEET at the age of 17 and 18; this may suggest that some young people leaving school face problems of transition, and might find the range of options available to them unattractive.
- Area factors influence a young person's chances of being NEET in Wales. Tightly targeted, area-based interventions - at school or local ward level - may be an effective way of identifying those young people who are in greatest need of assistance, and of helping to alleviate the harmful 'area effects' of being brought up in a relatively poor community. Our Wales Spatial Plan is therefore important, as is Communities First, our flagship programme to improve the living conditions and prospects of people in the most disadvantaged communities across Wales.

- Coming from a workless background also increases a young person's chances of experiencing NEET status. This suggests that we need to join up our approach to reducing the numbers of young people outside of education, employment or training with our efforts to reduce adult inactivity and worklessness, in an attempt to halt the cycle of unemployment within particular families becoming an accepted norm.

## **Our action for reducing the number of people who are NEET**

1.36 We want to ensure that as many young people as possible choose to stay in learning post-16, including those with multiple barriers to learning. Rather than introduce a compulsion to participate beyond the age of 16, our vision is to transform learning provision for young people by providing broader, more flexible learning options, matched by enhanced support and guidance. We believe that by increasing the quantity and quality of the options available to young people during their education, they will want to continue to participate in learning and will be able to see the value in doing so.

1.37 In order to reduce the proportion of young people aged 16-18 who are NEET, we will make changes so that we have:

- efficient processes for identifying and re-engaging those young people who become NEET;
- a full range of learning options to meet demand - to engage young people through sufficient provision at every level and in every style of learning. This is the rationale behind our 14-19 Learning Pathways programme - it means that each young person will have an individually- tailored learning pathway, leading to approved qualifications and awards of credit at the right levels and at the right time for the learner to meet his or her needs, interests and aptitudes; and
- more targeted and intensive learning and personal support, particularly through agencies which may be providing specialist support, as well as careers advice and guidance, to make sure that young people know how to access education, training or employment, and to enable them to overcome sometimes significant personal barriers to participation.

1.38 We set out in this document how we will work to progress these three elements of activity further.

## Chapter Two: The Right Systems

We will:

- work with colleagues across Welsh Assembly Government departments on co-ordinating services for people who are NEET and who have other support needs i.e. around health, social care and well-being, community safety, or homelessness;
- issue revised guidance during 2009 for Keeping in Touch (KIT) arrangements, currently set out in Annex 12 of the statutory Guidance on Extending Entitlement, building on the lessons we have learned over the past six years;
- work with our partners to develop further methods for early identification and support for young people likely to become NEET, aimed at preventing them falling out of the system in the first place; this will include engagement with the School Effectiveness Framework;
- work with our partners to improve the data that is held locally about young people who are NEET;
- develop a revised Statement of Arrangements, setting out requirements for schools, colleges and training providers to communicate as soon as a young person disengages from training or education;
- monitor how effectively organisations share information for the benefit of young people, and consider whether there is a need to strengthen our requirements upon them;
- develop, subject to approval, a new project funded via the European Social Fund, which will help deliver against the main aspects of this document - systems, provision and support;
- work, through Careers Wales, with schools to provide more standardised delivery of the Education Gateway and to make clearer the links and distinctions between post-16 Gateway and further Work Based Learning programmes;
- work with Children and Young People's Partnerships and 14-19 Networks to ensure that they identify a lead partner who will have co-ordinating responsibility for young people who are 16-18 and are NEET, within their area.

### Getting the systems in place

2.1 In order to reduce the number of young people who are NEET, we need to collect and use effectively all available information, respecting confidentiality, where appropriate - identifying numbers and characteristics of young people who are NEET; examining the current situation and new entrants and leavers; and using efficient assessment and referral processes and better long-term monitoring of children and young people.

2.2 There are many different organisations working with young people who are NEET, locally. They include local authority education and social service departments; health services; educational institutions; Careers Wales; statutory and voluntary youth services; youth offending teams; housing providers; Jobcentre Plus; the police and youth justice services; as well as numerous third sector<sup>27</sup> organisations. But without the right systems in place, there is a risk of duplication and inefficiency, as well as of young people falling through the network of support and provision available.

2.3 Strategic leadership to ensure co-operation across providers in meeting the needs of those who are NEET falls within the responsibility of Children and Young People's Partnerships, through their Children and Young People's Plans (CYPPs). Local authorities have the lead responsibility for bringing together local partners to improve outcomes for and the well-being of all children and young people in the area. Planning guidance under the Children Act 2004, entitled Shared Planning for Better Outcomes, was published in September 2007.

2.4 The CYPP is a three-year strategic plan that provides strategic vision; states the agreed priorities that will direct the work of all partners; sets agreed joint targets; and provides a basis for the joint commissioning of services. It is the key statement of planning intent for children and young people, to which all other plans must have regard. First plans, covering 2008-11, have been published on local authority websites.

2.5 The interests of those who are NEET fall primarily within Core Aim 2 of the CYPP. Planning Guidance states that:

*The Assembly Government is committed to ensuring that all young people have access to high quality education and training wherever they live, as well as a range of non-formal learning opportunities for 11-25 year olds. Lead responsibility under this Core Aim lies with the local authorities and education and training providers. However the multi-agency planning, involvement and support provided through the Partnership will contribute to achievement of Core Aim 2 outcomes for children and young people.*

2.6 Information on the needs of those who are NEET and services currently provided should be included in the Assessment of Need and service mapping process that begins the development of the CYPP.

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<sup>27</sup> The third sector includes organisations that are not profit-making and are independent of the state. They are value driven and principally re-invest surpluses or raise funds to further social, environmental or cultural objectives. The sector includes community groups, voluntary organisations, faith and equalities groups, charities, social enterprises, co-operatives, mutuals and housing associations

2.7 Keeping in Touch (KIT) protocols, developed as part of our Extending Entitlement programme by Young People's Partnerships, are an important part of the 'systems solution'. KIT protocols set out local processes for identifying, engaging, assessing and referring (for support) the hardest to reach young people aged 11-25. The protocols set out how local partners will work collaboratively to identify and solve gaps in provision, get rid of duplication of provision, and join up their funding

2.8 Guidance on Youth Support Services/ Extending Entitlement for ages 11-25 is currently being revised. Annex 12 of the current guidance sets out the Welsh Assembly Government's expectations as to how local authorities and their partners will put in place arrangements to keep in touch with all young people aged 11-25 who are NEET and support them to re-engage. Following the review of the main body of the guidance, Annex 12 will be revised to incorporate policy developments, lessons learned, and progress made across Wales since 2002 in Keeping in Touch work.

2.9 There are examples of very good emerging practice in implementing KIT across Wales. In all areas, however, there is more work to be done, and our aim in this document is to bring fresh impetus to developments. We will provide authorities with updated guidance on developing and implementing KIT protocols, taking into account the lessons we have learned over the past five years.

2.10 The School Effectiveness Framework provides the context within which the whole of the educational establishment is to work collaboratively and cohesively in order to secure the best learner outcomes for every learner in every educational setting in Wales. The Framework commits schools, local authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government to work to remove the barriers to the best educational opportunities that are available to our children and young people. A key element of the Framework is effective intervention and support. To be effective, that intervention must be early - preferably, as soon as it is identified that learners are falling behind in primary school. The intervention must also be strategic - that is, properly differentiated, so that it meets the needs of the individual learner. This will clearly have a positive effect in future years, in terms of reducing the number of children and young people who are NEET.

2.11 At a local level, given the proliferation of services and agencies working with young people who are NEET, aged 16-18, there is a need for stronger leadership in co-ordinating this work. Young People's Partnerships and Children and Young People's Partnerships operating at this level have a statutory responsibility for driving forward collaborative action and delivery for all young people. We will work with Young People's Partnerships and Children and Young People's Partnerships to agree a lead organisation to co-ordinate responsibility for young people aged 16-18 who are NEET, in their locality.



2.12 Nationally, our role will be to develop a stronger approach to KIT monitoring work in this area, and to help disseminate good and innovative practice. The new European funding programmes provide us with an opportunity to do this. Subject to approval, we will develop a new project, funded through the European Social Fund (ESF) for Convergence areas, which will deliver against the main aspects of this document - systems, provision and support. Findings and best practice from the project will be shared with areas of Wales not eligible for Convergence funding.

2.13 The National Attendance and Behaviour Review highlighted the need to improve the consistency of approach, with schools and local authorities to take on several key areas, including supporting young learners who have barriers to learning; the promotion of attendance and positive behaviour; exclusions practices; and the provision of education outside school, including that for excluded pupils. It also highlighted the need for all those working with children and young people to receive adequate training and support on these aspects, in order to undertake their role effectively. We will produce an action plan in response to the Review's recommendations, which will be a key thread of the approach to prevent NEETs.

2.14 The third phase of the Review of Special Educational Needs (2007), undertaken by the former ELLS Committee, which focused specifically on transition, also set out a number of recommendations which highlighted the need to improve current levels of support for children with SEN, moving on from school to further or higher education, or into employment. An external transition reference group is currently considering the Committee's recommendations.

## **Early Identification**

2.15 There is clear consensus that as most young people do not arrive at extreme need overnight, early identification and preventative work can reduce vulnerability and the necessity for future support. It is vital to prevent young people falling out in the first place, both for individual well-being and because it is more difficult and costly to re-engage people at a later stage.

2.16 What has emerged from our analysis in Chapter One is that young people who are NEET, or who are at strong risk of becoming so, do not spring up from nowhere - they are likely to be on the radar of organisations from an early age. Low attainers or attenders, and children and young people with behavioural problems, will be known to schools and to local authorities; Looked After Children will be known to social services; while young offenders will be known to youth justice services.



### *Emerging Practice: Early Identification*

The Glasgow Community Planning Partnership intends to develop a common trigger for intervention which will be when an individual child at the age of 12 is two levels below average attainment. This will be logged by the head teacher who will go on to produce a personalised development plan for that young person.

2.17 It is important that Children and Young People's Partnerships, local authorities and schools identify as early as possible which young people are most at risk of disengaging, so that they can act to prevent this from happening. CYPPs should take the lead in developing mechanisms for the identification of young people at risk and trigger intervention accordingly. KIT will have an important part to play in supporting and shaping these developments. Our forthcoming guidance on Children Missing Education (linked to KIT) will help authorities to develop systems for identifying children who do go missing.

2.18 There is no doubt that there is a risk factor associated with young people who are NEET becoming offenders. The All Wales Youth Offending Strategy has prevention at its core, with its main principle being that the best way to keep young people out of the youth justice system is to ensure that they do not enter it in the first place.

2.19 The Children's Commissioner for Wales and the National Behaviour and Attendance Review highlighted that the number of exclusions from schools is likely to be far higher than official figures, due to the use of unlawful exclusion practices. We need to remove the incentives for such practices and establish a means of collecting accurate information and consistently providing high-quality education for those taught outside mainstream schools. Our National Behaviour and Attendance Action Plan<sup>28</sup> will set out how we will do this. The introduction of an Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS) Pupil Level Annual School Census collection will support this development.

2.20 From September 2007, secondary schools in Wales and their feeder primary schools have been required, jointly, to draw up a Transition Plan, setting out arrangements to provide continuity and progression for pupils moving from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. Transition plans will establish a framework for schools to work together to consider how they can make best use of the information on pupils, to improve the quality of teaching and learning for those pupils. Transition planning will inform the early identification process, as well as the action required to ensure that a young person does not remain at risk of dropping out of education at an early age.

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<sup>28</sup> In March 2006, the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning committed to undertake a National Review of Behaviour and Attendance to shape and develop our future approach to those issues. The Steering Group was made up of representatives from key stakeholder groups, supported by colleagues from Estyn and the Children's Commissioner's Office for Wales

2.21 The Children Act 2004 (section 52) places a duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of Looked After Children. Duties of co-operation under section 25(2)(c) of the 2004 Act include education, training and recreation.

2.22 In 2007, the Welsh Assembly Government issued *Towards a Stable Life and a Brighter Future* - regulations and guidance to strengthen the arrangements for the placement, health, education and well-being of Looked After Children. This included a requirement for local authorities to appoint Looked After Children education co-ordinators, to co-ordinate the child's personal education plan and address their education needs and those of care leavers in the local authority area. It also strengthened the existing requirement for Looked After Children to have a Personal Education Plan using powers under the Children Act 2004.

2.23 In addition, Children's Homes are required to appoint a link worker to promote the educational achievement of Looked After Children.

2.24 The Welsh Assembly Government has provided funding to support Looked After Children, as part of the Raising Attainment and Individual Standards in Education (RAISE) grant, amounting to £1m per year, from 2006-07. This is primarily aimed at supporting these young people as they approach external exams, at the age of 16.

2.25 A key aim of the Children Act is to ensure that young people are not forced out of care before they are ready, by giving them a greater say over moves to independent living, and ensuring they retain support and guidance as long as they need it.

2.26 The 14-19 Learning Pathways will make a significant contribution to preventative activities. The 14-19 Framework is sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of young people of all abilities and backgrounds. It is seeking to engage young people through sufficient provision at every entry level, and in every learning style. It is intended that the availability of greater learner choice, including access to vocational courses and the provision of learner support, will ensure that fewer young people become NEET.

2.27 Young people engage on their individual Learning Pathways in Year 10, when they are provided with access to a range of learner support services, which are intended to help them to make the right learning choices about education, training and employment, and to support them to overcome any barriers to their participation in education, whether learning-related, or linked to their personal situation. If a young person's Learning Pathway is successful, then they are more likely to continue into education, employment or training at the age of 16, and should not become NEET. A successful Learning Pathway will help the young person, between the age of 14 and 19, to develop the wider skills that they need to realise their potential and become better equipped for the world of work, and to become better-informed and more active citizens.

2.28 The proposed Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure is intended to drive forward the implementation of Learning Pathways in Wales, and to ensure that the widest possible choice is made available to all learners in schools and colleges. The Measure will place a duty upon local authorities, schools and further education institutions to co-operate to ensure that young people have access to a wider choice of curriculum (options), which is better suited to their individual needs. This wider choice of options is offered at the pre-16 phase; and this enhanced experience will be supported by wider choice at post-16. There are a significant number of young people who are currently only able to access a narrow choice of courses at post-16, and this narrowness of choice might go some way towards explaining the lower participation rates amongst some young people.

2.29 In addition to a greater choice of courses, the proposed Measure will ensure that, through their Learning Pathways, young people are able to access a range of learner support services through a learning coach, personal support services, and careers advice and guidance. Therefore, young people who may be in danger of becoming NEET will have access to the necessary learning and personal support services, together with impartial careers advice and guidance, which would help them to access or remain in education, training or employment.

2.30 A One Wales Commitment states *"We will establish an enquiry into disengagement from learning amongst children and young people to look at evidence of what works. The remit will include transition from primary to secondary schools, the curriculum, the delivery of post-16 education and the potential of personalised learning."*

2.31 We will commission a research programme that will build upon the evaluation findings outlined in this document. The Bevan Foundation Report, *"Setting the Agenda: Priorities for Public Policy in Wales 2007-12"* and the research will support our commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The research programme will focus on getting the views of young people on their disengagement from learning, and will report during 2009.

#### *Emerging Practice: Early Identification*

Croydon Local Authority: Identification of local risk factors in NEET status

Croydon Education Research and Statistics carried out a mapping exercise of all school leavers since 2001 with all (identified) NEET young people since 2001 to try to identify local risk factors in predicting future NEET status.

Young people were matched on all census items - SEN status and type, eligibility for free school meals, ethnicity and school attended. They were also matched on all attainment data from KS1 - KS4, their predicted GCSE outcomes, and socio-economic measures including whether they had moved school after KS3. The model identified the significance of each variable in predicting future NEET status.

As a result of this work, a database has been provided to all local schools in the area which produces pupil list reports of those with a greater than 75% chance of a future NEET outcome.

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## Sharing information

2.32 By virtue of its size, Wales is in a good position to share information between partners effectively, and to build a more accurate picture of those that are NEET. For those over 19, we have secured provisions in the Education and Skills Act 2008, to enable data to be shared between HMRC, the Department for Children, Education Lifelong Learning and Skills (Welsh Assembly Government) and the Department for Work and Pensions, in order to inform a more integrated process of supplying employment and skills services, and to track progress into and through learning and employment. These provisions will allow us to monitor the performance of the skills, training and employment system in Wales and, over time, to measure the real employment and earnings impact of our programmes. It is important that information on the needs of young people who are NEET and services available to them is included in the phase 1 stage of service mapping and needs assessment that forms the basis of the Children and Young People's Plan in each local authority area.

2.33 We will also investigate ways of sharing the data that we hold to support our local partners, while maintaining appropriate confidentiality. For example, our post-16 learner database holds information which would be valuable to Careers Wales, and we need to ensure that, where possible, they are able to access it.

2.34 At a local level, we know that there is not enough sharing of information about NEET young people. Too many providers and agencies work in isolation, leading to duplication of effort and inefficiency. We recognise that there are sensitivities around data sharing, but these challenges are not insurmountable, and must not be used as an excuse for inaction.

2.35 Careers Wales companies are the main source of local area data about young people who are NEET. Careers Wales has worked hard in recent years to improve the quantity and quality of the data it holds on young people, reducing significantly the percentage of young people whose activity is unknown at the time its destination survey is undertaken. However, there is still work to do, and Careers Wales should continue to make improvements to data collection and assurance processes.

2.36 Local organisations must work together to agree on and implement a local information sharing strategy. *“Safeguarding Children: Working Together under the Children Act 2004”* provides guidance on information sharing in respect of children and young people. It covers all services, including health; education; early years and childcare; social care; youth offending; police; advisory and support services and leisure. The Wales Accord on the Sharing of Personal Information<sup>29</sup> guidance, developed by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales, will also be useful in this regard. Local Service Boards<sup>30</sup> might also provide support - the Boards have a role in tackling barriers to co-operation and delivery, and in enhancing the capacity and expertise of partnerships.

2.37 We will monitor how effectively organisations are sharing information for the benefit of young people, and will consider whether there is a need to strengthen our requirements upon them.

2.38 We have seen from our earlier analysis that the number of 17 and 18 year olds who are NEET is higher than the number of 16 year olds. This suggests that the sustainability of post-16 destinations is as much of an issue as the transition from compulsory education itself. We think that stronger notification systems are needed for when young people disengage from training or education. This is essential to make sure that young people receive support as soon as they drop out of learning and become NEET.

2.39 We will develop a revised Statement of Arrangements, setting out requirements for schools, colleges and training providers to notify a nominated lead, as soon as a young person aged 16-18 disengages from training or education. We are considering whether we should strengthen these arrangements further through stronger contractual conditions, if appropriate.

2.40 We have awarded a contract to Atkins Management Consultants to undertake a scoping study to examine the options available for improving information sharing between professionals working with children and young people in Wales.

2.41 Their task is to understand and evaluate best practice, identify opportunities to achieve improvements, and consider the current barriers to improve information sharing. A process of consultation, open engagement and analysis with stakeholders and local partners will help determine practical ways of managing information in order to improve service delivery and positive outcomes for children and young people.

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<sup>29</sup> [http://new.wales.gov.uk/social\\_services/Publications/latestpublications/WASPI\\_2007?lang=en](http://new.wales.gov.uk/social_services/Publications/latestpublications/WASPI_2007?lang=en)

<sup>30</sup> Established in accordance with Making the Connections: Delivering Beyond Boundaries (2006)

### *Emerging Practice: Information Sharing Agreement and Multi-agency Database*

Careers Wales Cardiff and Cardiff Youth Service have entered into a local information sharing agreement resulting in the Youth Service gaining access to Careers Wales' client database in Cardiff.

As an enhancement to this, Cardiff 14-19 Networks, YPPs and Careers Wales have collaborated to establish a multi-agency database. When launched, the database will enable any official who is in contact with a young person to register their interest and to see which other workers and agencies are also involved. The model will also enable an individual to be assigned a lead professional who will take responsibility for co-ordinating cross agency intervention. As the model develops, agencies with access will include Local Authority Schools Services, YOT teams, local health services, the police, fire service and Children's Services.

## **Assessment and referral**

2.42 Notification of a young person NEET is not enough; a co-ordinated response requires assessment and referral processes which lead to integrated action to try to re-engage a young person with education, employment or training opportunities, or to deal with the issues that prevent them from re-engaging in a planned way.

2.43 Children and Young People's Partnerships should establish assessment and referral processes, with the purpose of co-ordinating the provision of an individualised package of support, matched to the needs, interests and aptitude of identified young people. Our work in developing and piloting the Common Assessment Framework<sup>31</sup> (CAF) will be helpful here. The CAF is being developed as a new way to help children, young people and their families, through the provision of a standardised assessment of need, undertaken by a trained worker.

2.44 Careers Wales Youth Gateway (post -16) and Education Gateway (pre-16) are two of our main programmes aimed at supporting young people who are unfocused on what they want to do and at risk of being NEET. The programmes offer young people intensive assessment, mentoring and support, so that they can re-engage or progress to training, education or other options. Post -16 Youth Gateway offers tailored programmes, with no prescribed length of stay - in some instances, a week of assessment is sufficient to focus young people and help them to move on. In other cases, there may be a need to devise a programme of confidence building, skills development and work tasters, over a period of several months.

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<sup>31</sup> The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) in Wales will help a range of practitioners undertake an initial holistic assessment of a child or young person's needs. It will help them identify and understand the child's needs and decide what the most appropriate response should be. <http://www.cafwales.co.uk/>

2.45 Careers Wales has achieved positive results with both Youth Gateway and with Education Gateway, which is targeted at young people still at school who have been identified as at high risk of disengaging. However, we know that there are significant regional variations in the delivery of the programmes. This is often to fit with locally identified needs, but in some cases, we think that the programmes are trying to do too much. We want Careers Wales to work with schools to provide a more standardised delivery of its Education Gateway programme across Wales, and to make clearer the links and distinctions between post -16 Gateway and work-based training programmes.

## Planning

2.46 The primary vehicle for bringing things together at the local level is the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) that local authorities must produce, under the provisions of the Children's Act 2004.

2.47 The rights and needs of young people who are NEET are covered by Core Aim 2 of the CYPP guidance. Each Core Aim summarises a number of rights drawn from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), adopted by the Welsh Assembly Government as the basis for all its work on behalf of children and young people. Articles 28, 29 and 30 of the UNCRC include the rights of young people aged 16-18 to education. Core Aim 2 aims to ensure that every child and young person has access to a comprehensive range of education, training and learning opportunities. CYPP Guidance, *"Shared Planning for Better Outcomes"* - WAG Circular 31/2007, further advises that all should *"engage in full-time education; have any barriers to learning identified early and removed; reach their full potential; continue in personal and informal education training or employment to age 19; and achieve social and economic well-being."*

2.48 Local authorities have statutory responsibilities to address the needs of pupils with additional learning needs, including a number of the groups identified in Chapter One, as more likely to be NEET. Children and Young People's Partnerships are encouraged to identify key performance indicators and targets, and to show in their CYPP how progress in improving outcomes for young people who are NEET is being made.



## Chapter Three: The Right Provision

We will:

- ensure that learners experience a greater range of learning opportunities, in order to better match their needs and those of employers;
- legislate to place a duty upon local authorities, schools and further education institutions to co-operate in the delivery of a local options menu for young people, and to deliver an enhanced entitlement for learners to the options, experiences and support that are part of their Learning Pathway;
- take forward our Youth Enterprise Strategy and Dynamo role model programmes, to help ensure that young people develop the skills they need for work;
- investigate the reasons for low take-up of in-work training and employment by 16 and 17 year olds, and develop new ways of promoting skills development and training to working young people and their employers;
- pilot a new programme to replace *Skillbuild*, which will tackle the significant additional support needs that many young people who are NEET have before they are able to move closer to the labour market;
- support the continued development of service providers, through our contract management and quality improvement processes;
- work with our partners, including Jobcentre Plus, Careers Wales, Sector Skills Councils and employers, to improve the quantity and quality of job opportunities available to young people, and tie this closely to the *Careers Ladders concept, as outlined in Skills that Work for Wales*;
- promote co-ordinated approaches across the voluntary and statutory service providers at a local level, to ensure that education, employment and training providers link up with other specialist support agencies to provide for engagement with hard-to-reach groups, such as those who have homelessness, substance misuse or offending support needs, thus supporting them to access education, employment or training;
- work with providers to investigate flexible course start dates and learning offers;
- expand the Basic Skills Employer Pledge.

### What do young people say about learning?

3.1 We are committed to driving forward implementation across Wales of the principles of Article 12 of the UNCRC, by taking steps to ensure that all children and young people aged 0-25 have opportunities to contribute to and have their voices heard in decision making on issues which impact on their lives. We have recently published guidance<sup>32</sup> for the local authorities' partner agencies to support

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<sup>32</sup> <http://wales.gov.uk/docrepos/40382/4038232/403821/204461/lp-strat-e.pdf?lang=en>



the development of local participation strategies. It is vital that participation strategies enable all young people to have a say about the learning and employment options available to them, which are an important part of their lives.

3.2 We know from the Youth Cohort Survey that most young people aged 16-18 who are NEET say that it is because the right jobs or learning provision is not available, or that they do not have the qualifications to progress<sup>33</sup>. Our work with young people as part of the development of this document supports those findings.

3.3 The central part of our response to the 16-18 year old NEET issue has therefore been to specify arrangements to work with young people to identify and address their needs and barriers - principally, through the Youth Gateway - and to engage young people more effectively in learning. The key here is to offer them a wider choice of options on what and how they study as they move through their education, and to make sure that their choices give them the skills they need to progress to good quality jobs.

3.4 We have reformed the qualifications framework, to ensure that there is the right range of provision to meet young people's needs and to give them the skills that they need for work and for life. All future vocational qualifications used across England, Wales and Northern Ireland will have credit as an integral element, forming a part of the wider Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). Credit is important, because not everyone wants or is able to study for a full qualification. Credit is a new way of recognising achievement that will enable learners to work towards qualifications in small steps, and at their own pace, receiving credit for completing accredited short courses, on-the-job training and even informal learning.

## A new approach to learning at 14-19

3.5 Rather than introduce a compulsion to participate in learning beyond 16, our approach is to increase the quantity and the quality of the options available to young people during their education, so that they want to continue to participate in learning, and can see the value in doing so. The 14-19 Learning Pathways is transforming learning provision for young people in Wales, giving them a greater say in decisions about their learning, as well as broader, more flexible learning options, matched by enhanced support and guidance.

3.6 The six key elements of Learning Pathways are:

### *Learning Pathways*

- *Individual Learning Pathways to meet the needs of each learner.* This means that each young person will have an individually-tailored Learning Pathway, leading to approved qualifications and awards of credit, at the right levels

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<sup>33</sup> Payne J (2000) youth cohort study: Education, training and employment of 16-18 Year olds in England and the factors associated with non-participation. <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b000162/sb02-2000.pdf>

and at the right time for the learner. Each learner's Learning Pathway will have a combination of formal, non-formal and informal elements<sup>34</sup> and the balance between the elements will vary according to the learner's needs. The individual strands of a Learning Pathway are designed to enable all learners to have wider enriching experiences to gain wider skills, which will be helpful in motivation and for future employability.

- *Wider choice and flexibility of programmes and ways of learning.* Each young person will be given a wide choice of academic and vocational courses.
- *A Learning Core* consisting of the skills, knowledge, understanding, attitudes, values and experiences that all learners need, to prepare them for further learning, employment, personal fulfillment and their contribution to our bilingual and diverse society, regardless of the Learning Pathway that a learner chooses to follow.

### *Support for Learners*

- *Learning Coach.* Entitlement to learning support - an opportunity for each young person to discuss and find solutions to any barriers to their learning.
- *Access to personal support.* Access to support to overcome personal barriers to learning.
- *Careers advice and guidance.* Impartial careers advice and guidance. To underpin 14-19 Learning Pathways, we are developing legislation which will place a duty on local education authorities, schools and further education institutions to co-operate in the delivery of a local curriculum, to ensure greater choice for young people. The legislation aims to secure a minimum entitlement to the number of options for learners, and to ensure that young people have access to the support that will help them move forward with their individual Learning Pathway; a commitment that we made in *One Wales*.

3.7 To implement Learning Pathways, local 14-19 Networks play an important strategic role in ensuring that there is the right range of provision available for learners in their areas. This includes learners who are already NEET, and those at high risk of becoming so. Since 2002, the Networks have been required to carry out audits of local provision, assessing whether it is sufficient to meet the needs of young people.

### **Cymorth Cymru**

3.8 Cymorth Cymru aims to provide a network of targeted support for children and young people, within a framework of universal provision, in order to improve the life chances of children and young people from disadvantaged families. The overall aim of Cymorth is to use partnership working and targeted

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<sup>34</sup> FORMAL - organized learning opportunities leading to approved qualifications and/or CQFW credit achievements

NON FORMAL - organized programmes that may lead to accreditation but typically outside the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

INFORMAL - wider experiences normally without formal recognition e.g. volunteering

investment in disadvantaged communities to promote its objectives, and to impact positively, in the medium term, on the indicators of well-being for children and young people.

3.9 Theme E of Cymorth is the main source of additional grant funding to support young people who are NEET and potentially NEET. We have updated our guidance on the use of Theme E, to help improve its focus. We have also requested that local authorities review the projects that they fund through Cymorth Theme E, to ensure that they are consistent with our actions set out in this document, and that they are offering the third sector sufficient opportunity to access funding. We will play a stronger role in approving and monitoring projects funded through Theme E of Cymorth.

### *Skillbuild*

3.10 Because of the numbers of young people in the 16-18 year old NEET group who are lower achievers, it is particularly important to have access to relevant training and support. Currently, our major programme with young people who are NEET, or at risk of being NEET, is *Skillbuild*. *Skillbuild* is an all-age learning programme for people who are not yet ready or able to enter an apprenticeship, or further learning or employment opportunities. We offer a guarantee (the Youth Guarantee) of a learning place for all eligible 16 and 17 year-olds, and *Skillbuild* is the primary way that this is delivered. We will maintain our commitment to the Youth Guarantee.

3.11 The evaluation of our work-based learning programmes has shown that *Skillbuild* has not always provided the level of intensive support required by some young people<sup>35</sup> especially those who have significant basic skills problems and who may also have a range of personal and social problems which impact on their ability to progress - in other words, those young people most likely to become NEET.

3.12 In response to the formal evaluation and feedback from stakeholders, we are making changes to *Skillbuild*. We have extended access to training at levels 2 and 3 for 16-18 year olds - this was identified as a barrier to progression for some young people. We have improved access to basic and key skills as part of the programme. This is an important change, which gives providers the option of securing additional support, good quality life skills, or other provision - crucial for the sustained progression of many vulnerable young people.

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<sup>35</sup> The evaluation of *Skillbuild* in Wales concluded that "(Skillbuild) does not meet the need of those who are most disadvantaged.". *Skillbuild* predominantly focuses on developing skills to support employability, even though for some young people addressing a range of additional support needs should be the primary concern. Other concerns included a lack of secure quality placements for young people (only 8% of 16 year olds take up Work-based learning); a high level of *Skillbuild* starts in 16 -18 age group (75%); Reasons for Early Leaving from FE and Work-Based Learning Courses, Claire Simm, Rosie Page, Linda Miller, Institute for Employment Studies, 2007

3.13 However, feedback suggests that despite the changes we have made, there remains a lack of opportunity for young people who have a range of additional support needs which need to be addressed before attempting to develop the skills to support employability. We are therefore developing a new programme to replace *Skillbuild*.

3.14 We will develop and test aspects of the programme from 2008 to July 2010, in two areas of Wales - one urban and one rural - and will link it closely with the implementation of 14-19 Learning Pathways. This approach will aim to raise the overall quality of provision; reduce the number of re-entrants to the programme - significant in minimising the "revolving door" of NEET young people; and increase the rate of progression into employment. The pilot programmes will:

- trial improvements to induction and initial assessment, including assessment of basic and employability skills;
- facilitate improved support mechanisms to guide and encourage participants, building on the 14-19 Learning Pathways developments;
- assess how we can best encourage collaboration between providers and broaden the range of provision available;
- evaluate different methods of informal learning;
- consider the funding of job-specific licences, based on employment sector demands and requirements, to assist in gaining employment;
- test the operation of *Skillbuild* as a separate programme for adults and for young people.

3.15 We will align the programme more closely with Jobcentre Plus provision, recognising that what is needed by young people who are NEET is not so very different from what is needed by unemployed adults. Pilot changes will also take account of the Department for Work and Pensions' welfare reform measures.

3.16 The results of the pilots will inform the all-Wales re-launch of *Skillbuild*, focused on employment as a key outcome. The revised *Skillbuild* programme will complement our action to reduce the number of young people in Wales who are NEET, and for adult participants, it will complement Flexible New Deal provision and Local Employment Partnerships.

## **A flexible provider network**

3.17 One of the most important measures of success of the post-16 system is the extent to which it helps the most vulnerable young people get into, stay in, and progress between education, training and employment.

3.18 As well as providing greater choice of learning provision, we need to make delivery more flexible. We need to increase the flexibility of the system, to enable more young people to start programmes during the course of the academic year, so that those who drop out, or do not start a course in September, can be re-engaged quickly. We recognise that it is particularly important that we ensure

that young people can start courses throughout the year, and particularly in January, which has historically been a moment when some young people drop out, having made a poor choice in September. We will work with providers, 14-19 Networks and young people, to consider how to provide flexible learning opportunities with, where possible, flexible start dates.

3.19 Colleges are already demonstrating this flexibility, by allowing students to transfer from unsuitable courses within 8 weeks of the start date, and implementing modular approaches whereby flexible opportunities to enter learning are possible, provided that there is capacity. We will identify best practice, and encourage providers to share this through the Quality and Effectiveness Framework and Fforwm.

## Skills for work

3.20 We know that many young people are keen to enter the world of work, and that pushing them towards full-time education when this is the case may be counterproductive. That said, we need to ensure that young people do not churn between low-paid, low-skilled employment, with little hope of progression or sustainability.

3.21 Our 14-19 policy includes an ambitious aspiration for everyone to be able to follow a Learning Pathway, including preparation for, and engagement with, the world of work. Delivering this goal means involving employers much more closely in a wide range of education and training for young people.

3.22 In recent years, we have been developing programmes to enable young people to combine learning in schools and college with more practical learning in the workplace. We have provided guidance for schools on delivering vocational provision pre-16<sup>36</sup> and we are working with Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) to pilot Work-Based Learning Pathways for young people.

3.23 In 2007, we established the 14-19 Employer Engagement Task Force, which made a number of recommendations to improve work experience for young people, and to make it more relevant to their other learning activities. This is being taken forward in the context of a review of Careers Wales.

3.24 Learners undertaking Work-Based Learning Pathways are mainly 14-16 year olds who are keen to learn in a more practical way. The Learning Pathways are challenging, and combine core GCSEs in schools, with a more practical hands-on approach through employer contact and real work experience. As part of this work, learners achieve an industry recognised vocational qualification. The new Work-Based Learning Pathways have significant potential to engage young people who are turned off by traditional forms of learning.

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<sup>36</sup> Making a Difference, Vocational Provision 14-16, Guidance for Schools, WAG

3.25 Our Youth Enterprise Strategy<sup>37</sup> seeks to enhance this agenda, through the promotion of entrepreneurial skills within the curriculum, training for staff, and the promotion of entrepreneurship champions in colleges and universities. Similarly, our Dynamo Role Model programme, delivered by Careers Wales Education Business Links Programme, helps to bring industry and education together, delivering workshops led by local business leaders to over 50,000 pupils in Wales. We will consider how best we can build on the success of these programmes, to ensure that young people can develop the skills they need for work.

## In-work training

3.26 Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) and Foundation Modern Apprenticeships (FMAs) are high-quality learning routes, offering a unique combination of paid employment or work-experience, on-the-job training, and the opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills needed for a career. Apprenticeships provide a high-quality pathway for many young people who prefer practical, rather than classroom-based, learning. We have made a commitment in *One Wales* to increase apprenticeship training.

3.27 We will work with Careers Wales and with Sector Skills Councils to encourage more employers to offer apprenticeships. We have begun the development of an Apprenticeship Matching Service, which will help raise the profile of apprenticeships, encourage engagement with a wider range of employers, and make it easier for young people to access apprenticeship opportunities. Apprenticeships will be aligned with the Welsh Baccalaureate, and opportunities will be extended to allow young people to get the experience and training in school and college which will assist them in accessing apprenticeship placements and progression opportunities.

3.28 We are aware that many employers, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, struggle to provide MA and FMA places, and this can have a significant impact on the availability of provision. We are piloting shared apprenticeships in two sectors, to create more opportunities within SMEs and engage those employers who have not traditionally participated in apprenticeship training. We will build upon the lessons learned from the pilots to develop further approaches to help ensure that sufficient placements are available for young people to enter apprenticeship training.

3.29 Low-skilled 16 and 17 year olds in employment are vulnerable to unemployment. They therefore have a statutory right to time off from work to study or train<sup>38</sup>. However evidence suggests that take-up of this entitlement is very low. We will investigate the reasons for low take-up and develop new ways of promoting training to working young people as well as to their employers.

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<sup>37</sup> [http://www.projectdynamo.com/application/downloads/WDA\\_YES.pdf](http://www.projectdynamo.com/application/downloads/WDA_YES.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> Under the terms of section 63A of the Employment Rights Act 1996 and the Right to Time Off for Study or Training Regulations 2001, any employee aged 16 or 17 in England and Wales who does not already have a specified level of qualification (broadly set at Level 2) has the right to take reasonable paid time off work in order to study or train for a relevant qualification

3.30 We have been working closely with training providers to raise apprenticeship success rates and reduce the number of learners who drop out before completing their learning programme. As part of our Quality and Effectiveness Framework, we will continue to set challenging targets for providers, and will support further improvements through initiatives such as benchmarking and sharing of best practice.

3.31 We will also expand our successful Basic Skills Employer Pledge, which commits employers to 'help employees with poor basic skills to improve these skills'. The Pledge already covers 20% of Welsh employees, and we will substantially increase this. We will encourage more employers to take the Pledge, by taking account of a commitment to it when we allocate discretionary funding grants.



## Chapter Four: The Right Support

We will:

- continue to improve our approach to the support of pupils with additional learning needs, through introducing and enhancing guidance and improved processes;
- continue to improve means of promoting minority ethnic achievement in education, with new guidance on promoting race equality and cultural diversity within the curriculum, and a review of the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant;
- continue to improve our strategic approach to the provision of information, advice and guidance for young people;
- continue the further development of a Learning Coach module specifically for supporting NEET and potentially NEET young people;
- work with young people themselves to help them develop ownership of and buy-in to our future approach;
- develop a National Strategy for Financial Inclusion, which will incorporate the specific needs of young people who are NEET;
- develop a guidance pack to support local partner agencies in delivering personal support to young people - helping them to overcome personal barriers which may prevent them from engaging in education, training or employment;
- review the forms of financial support offered to 16-19 year olds, with a view to achieving greater parity;
- conduct an evaluation of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) scheme in Wales, assessing ways in which to maximise the potential of the scheme to encourage engagement, retention and progression for young people at risk of becoming NEET;
- work with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to consider the impact of changes to Jobseeker's Allowance for 16 and 17 year olds in Wales;
- work closely with DWP to consider the impact of the introduction of the Flexible New Deal on young people in Wales.

### Information, Advice and Guidance

4.1 Most young people, supported by parents, friends and school or college, can manage the transition from childhood to adulthood successfully. But for some, this support, for whatever reason, is not available or not used. Impartial information, advice and guidance from Careers Wales is a vital part of the service provided to young people to help prepare them for continuing learning and



sustained employment. This is complemented by our new approach to Careers and the World of Work, as part of the school curriculum.

4.2 The information, advice and guidance (IAG) that young people receive can be an important factor in their decision-making. Research<sup>39</sup> has demonstrated that the timing of information given to individuals is important in framing their choice of learning route. Currently, much information is made available or received in 'short bursts', often just before a critical career or educational transition. But evidence<sup>40</sup> has highlighted that disaffection from the educational system is deeply rooted long before the minimum school leaving age; choices about staying on or leaving learning do not normally involve conscious decisions taken during the last year of compulsory schooling, but are based rather on long-standing assumptions.

4.3 We will develop our approach to the better provision of information, advice and guidance to young people, and have recently awarded the contract for the delivery of the 3rd National Information and Advice Project for Young People Aged 11-25, Clic Online. ([www.cliconline.co.uk](http://www.cliconline.co.uk))

## Personal and Learning Support

4.4 Given the multiple challenges that many young people at risk of being NEET face, bespoke solutions involving more intensive support and guidance are often required.<sup>41</sup> Critical success factors in this type of work include support to identify needs, motivations and aspirations; detailed mentoring; help to overcome personal barriers to learning; and an advocacy role on behalf of the young person when engaging with employers or training and education providers. This approach is the rationale for the Support for Learners strand of our 14-19 Learning Pathways programme.

4.5 Our Inclusion and Pupil Support guidance sets out our national policy on ensuring that education in Wales is inclusive and caters for the needs of individual learners, adapting for those who require additional support, whether this is in the short or long-term (termed as Additional Learning needs). We will continue to develop our approaches on these aspects, and will ensure that developments are undertaken within the overall context of a reduction in the NEET population. These developments include the implementation of a National Behaviour and

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<sup>39</sup> Reasons for Early Leaving from FE and Work-Based Learning Courses, Claire Simm, Rosie Page, Linda Miller, Institute for Employment Studies, 2007

<sup>40</sup> Rees G. et al (1996) Status zero. A study of jobless school leavers in South Wales. Research Papers in Education 11 (2) pp219-235

<sup>41</sup> Edward Melhuish (2004) A Literature Review of the Impact of Early Years Provision on Young Children, with Emphasis Given to Children from Disadvantaged Backgrounds. Institute for the Study of Children, Families & Social Issues Birkbeck, University of London (Prepared for the National Audit Office). <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/RRP/u013349/index.shtml>; What works in preventing and re-engaging young people NEET in London, Research on young people 'not in education, employment, or training (NEET)' commissioned by the Greater London Authority, 2007

Attendance Action Plan; a change in support arrangements for those with more complex needs, supported by new legislation; improvements to the attainment of Looked After Children and minority ethnic pupils; and the reduction of bullying.

4.6 The need for individualised support is also the rationale for the Support for Learners strand of our 14-19 Learning Pathways programme. One of the most important developments of 14-19 Learning Pathways is the introduction of the Learning Coach function, which offers support for all young people. Learning Coaches will help learners to develop and improve their learning skills and styles; make choices; develop goals; and identify appropriate aspects of their Learning Pathway, in formal and non-formal learning. Learning Coaches will support all young people, but we believe that this development is likely to have an especially beneficial impact on young people who, for example, might have chosen an inappropriate Learning Pathway; are reluctant learners; or who are at risk of disengaging from the curriculum - those young people most at risk of becoming NEET.

4.7 Young people who have already dropped out or disengaged from education or training will require the most skilled Learning Coach support to enable them to re-engage. We will develop a module for Learning Coach support, specifically for NEET and potentially NEET young people. This development will link closely with the Personal Support element of Learning Pathways, since it is the intensive level of personal support that is often most essential with NEET young people enabling personal needs to be met before or alongside re-engagement in learning.

#### *Case Study: Multiple Barriers to Re-engagement*

Young person X lives in a deprived urban area X is severely and profoundly deaf and has difficulty with speech and language, finding new vocabulary and concepts difficult to process. X has found the transition period from school very difficult and confusing and this has manifested in emotional and physical outbursts. X has previously received support from Social Services including involvement with a project to address sexual offences.

At the request of X, meetings with a Youth Gateway advisor took place sitting down face to face using action planning and session reviews. The initial sessions enabled X to highlight additional support needs. The adviser helped X to understand learning styles and spent a session identifying comfort zones before discussing work, training and education opportunities. The adviser identified that X required mentoring to develop social skills and positive role modelling which would help with self-esteem and motivation. X would also need 1-1 support to help access and sustain a training place.

Youth Gateway identified a local training provider that would be able to offer relevant work based training and work experience. They also discussed and visited informal training providers that could offer programmes of support, anger management, self esteem and confidence building activities.

The adviser contracted with three local providers to provide a tailored and purposeful training package. X accessed work based qualifications and placement two days a week. The remaining three days were spent working on soft outcomes including confidence building, self esteem, and life skills with a specialist 1-1 support worker. This has put X on the path to attend mainstream training on a full time basis with continued support beyond the transition.

At the last mentoring meeting with the adviser, young person X commented **“I am loving all the different things I’m doing.”**

4.8 The Personal Support aspect of Learning Pathways will ensure access for learners to services or people to support them in developing solutions to personal, social, emotional and physical problems, which may ultimately result in a premature exit from learning or employment. All young people will have an entitlement for access to personal support, though not all learners will need to take advantage of these services. Those who do may require various degrees of support, ranging from knowledge of where to seek information, someone to listen to a problem, or specialist help.

4.9 The range of personal support needs that an individual young person might face is vast. We know that a high proportion of young people with caring and domestic responsibilities are NEET. They will need support to enable them to balance their domestic responsibilities with a return to learning or working. For others, personal support might mean help to overcome substance abuse,<sup>42</sup> mental health support, housing advice, or preparation for independent living.

#### *Case Study: Insecure Housing*

An Employment Training Advisor from Careers Wales identified that client Y lacked confidence and needed help and guidance with career choices. The advisor established that she would benefit from working with a 1-1 Personal Advisor on a Youth Gateway course.

The personal advisor and client discussed career ideas and sent out her CV and application forms to hairdressing establishments. The client gained a two week trial with a local hairdresser with a view to a permanent job if successful.

During the trial the client advised that she had left the family home due to an incident of domestic violence. The advisor accompanied the client to the Social Service office and homeless agencies to support the client to find temporary accommodation and help with completing any forms. The client finished her placement and was offered a full time position with training.

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<sup>42</sup> Our ten year strategy, ‘Working Together to Reduce Harm,’ the substance misuse strategy for Wales 2008-2018 is currently out for consultation

A multi agency approach with collaboration between Social Services, third sector organisations and Careers Wales, ensured the client was found temporary accommodation at a homeless hostel whilst waiting for council accommodation.

The client is now working at the hairdresser. She is attending college one day a week and has secured permanent council accommodation.

4.10 We do not believe it is sensible to provide support through a single channel - a variety of good quality support is most likely to be effective in addressing the multitude of individual needs.

4.11 Support can be accessed in learning settings, for example, from school counselling services, careers advisers, school nurses and Learning Coaches. Often, personal support will be provided in the community - in a health centre; a youth centre; from third sector organisations; or from a street-based youth worker. For young people facing specific issues, personal support could be provided via referral to a specialist, for example, a social worker, housing adviser, or Youth Offending Team worker. For the most needy young people, personal support is likely to be longer term and more intensive, based on developing personal relationships with young people, to enable them to stay in specialist programmes. These young people will continue to need support as they progress, as they are often at their most vulnerable when they are turning their lives around. The implementation of our National School-Based Counselling Strategy, which was established in 2008/09, will be a key new source of support for our children and young people.

### *Case Study: Personal Support in Custody*

One-year re-offending rates for males aged 10-17 in custodial sentences stand at 78%. Access to education, training and employment can help prevent re-offending. However, young people often have complex needs and face multiple barriers which make the transition from custody to the community and then on into education, training or employment particularly challenging. Our Personal Support in Custody Pilot Project aimed to support the transitions of Welsh young people from Bridgend and Denbighshire serving their custodial sentences in two English Young Offender Institutions (YOI), Ashfield and Stoke Heath.

Initial results from the project appear positive: The evaluation<sup>43</sup> found that:

- the project helped ensure that young people did not lose focus in the first two weeks following release: 19 of the 21 young people on the project who were released by March 2007, made it through their first two weeks in the community without serious incident.

<sup>43</sup> Dancing Through The Gaps: the External Evaluation Of The Welsh Assembly Government Personal Support In Custody Pilot Project, 2007

- Overall, the project enabled just under half the young people it supported to access education, training and employment and a third had not re-offended by the end of the project.
- Key worker relationships with young people influenced the success of the interventions as did the ease with which workers could broker access to education, training and employment opportunities and the extent to which the work was integrated with the local Youth Offending Team, Young People's Partnership and the Youth Offending Institution.
- The project was most effective for those young people who had reached a point in their lives when they wanted to change. In these cases, the project could provide both practical and pastoral support to help both broker access to opportunities and services and develop young people's personal capabilities, particularly social and emotional skills so that they could make effective use of those opportunities and services.

4.12 Children and Young People's Partnerships (CYPP) or Young Peoples Partnerships (YPP) in each local authority area are responsible for co-ordinating the planning and delivery of young people's entitlement to personal support. Each YPP has conducted an audit of provision, and should be working with the 14-19 Networks to ensure that this key element of Learning Pathways is available for the young people who need it. As stated in Chapter Two, guidance for local CYP partnerships and 14-19 Networks on personal support is currently under development, as part of the review of Extending Entitlement/Youth Support Services Guidance.

4.13 The aim of our Youth Service Strategy is to ensure greater coherence across the youth work field, by securing more effective engagement between the youth service, 14-19 Learning Pathways, community- based schools and Learning Coaches. The strategy identifies a range of outcomes for young people, achieved through their involvement with the Youth Service, including participation in a wide range of meaningful activities, wider skills development, and enhanced emotional competence. The Youth Service has a clear role to play in the delivery of personal support: youth work can and should make a significant contribution to the creation of a framework of personal support within learning settings and in communities, out of formal learning hours.

4.14 Subject to approval, we will also develop a new project, funded via the European Social Fund, which will help deliver against all aspects outlined in this document. The project will draw together a number of national joint sponsors across Wales to:

- develop, pilot on a regional basis and implement a systematic and innovative approach to identifying young people who are at risk of becoming, or who are currently, NEET (based on characteristics identified through research);

- undertake further research to support the development of an evidence base for best practice in early intervention and keeping in touch with young people aged 11-19 who are, or who are likely to become, NEET;
- provide training for professionals across Wales in a number of methods that can be used to engage with young people who are hard-to-reach, disengaged, or disaffected;
- deliver a range of interventions to young people who are likely to underachieve, to ensure that they remain engaged, or re-engage with, education, employment, or training, including tailored personal support;
- deliver a range of interventions to young people to enhance their personal development and ensure that they have opportunities to undertake work-type experience and gain skills that can be used either in further learning or employment; and
- promote the identification and sharing of good practice.

4.15 Approaches will be trialled and tailored to address the needs of specific 'at-risk' groups - including Gypsy Travellers, refugees and asylum-seeking young people, young offenders, young carers, Looked After Children, care leavers, and certain minority ethnic groups.

## Careers advice and guidance

4.16 An important aspect of the Support for Learners strand of Learning Pathways is careers advice and guidance. Careers Wales works with young people in schools and FE colleges to ensure that they have the support and advice needed to make a successful transition at 16 and beyond to further learning or employment. Careers guidance plays a key role in helping young people to test out their career and learning ideas; ensures that their aims have been explored and challenged; helps them evaluate their individual strengths, interests, abilities, experiences and learning styles; and raises their aspirations in making informed choices about their learning/career pathways.

## Supporting families and communities

4.17 Parents have a key role in this agenda. Being a parent is a big job. Everyone who looks after children needs support and encouragement. They also need advice and information about a range of things, as their children grow up. Our Parenting Action Plan<sup>44</sup> has sought to ensure that parents in Wales get the advice and support they need. As a result of this work, we are hoping to introduce initiatives such as the Integrated Family Support Service, specifically designed to support vulnerable families. Our programmes to reduce child poverty will also support the actions set out in this document. We will continue to develop this work, over the coming years.

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<sup>44</sup> [http://new.wales.gov.uk/docrepos/40382/4038232/4038211/Guidance\\_and\\_Information/parenting-action-plan-e.pdf?lang=en](http://new.wales.gov.uk/docrepos/40382/4038232/4038211/Guidance_and_Information/parenting-action-plan-e.pdf?lang=en)

4.18 There can be little doubt that the primary influence over most young people is their parents or immediate carers. A study<sup>45</sup> examining the importance of parental involvement on pupil achievement suggests that a significant proportion of school-based success can be attributed to the interest and involvement of parents.

4.19 Children whose parents have poor basic skills are more likely to struggle with basic skills themselves. The purpose of our Family Learning programmes, delivered as part of our Basic Skills Strategy<sup>46</sup> is to support parents and to raise standards of literacy and numeracy for both them and their children. It is also to extend parents' skills in supporting their children's education. We recognise that addressing the basic skills problem will take time and resource. We are considering the scope for, and benefits of, a statutory entitlement to free basic skills learning for all post-16 learners. Improving both basic and work-related skills is an important element in our drive to tackle child poverty and to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and their families.

4.20 Community-Focused Schools have a role to play in involving local adults in the life of the school - embedding the community in the school and the school within its community. A Community Focused School is one that provides a range of services and activities, often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of its pupils, their families, and the wider community. Across Wales, many schools have extended their level of involvement to pupils and their families, to provide some community services, including adult education, out of hours learning, ICT facilities and community sports programmes.

4.21 Our analysis in Chapter One has illustrated that coming from a workless background may increase a young person's chances of experiencing a period of being NEET. This suggests that we need to join up our approaches to tackling youth NEETness with our efforts to tackle adult inactivity and worklessness.

4.22 In Chapter Three, we stated that we will align our *Skillbuild* programme more closely with Jobcentre Plus provision, recognising that what is needed by young people who are NEET is not entirely different to what is needed by unemployed adults.

4.23 The major direct causes of worklessness relate to the characteristics of individuals - notably, a low level of skills - rather than of places. However, people with similar characteristics are often concentrated in certain locations, which is one reason why there is such a prevalence of economic inactivity in certain areas, such as the Heads of the Valleys.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Desforges et al (2003)

<sup>46</sup> Words Talk, Numbers Count, WAG, 2005

<sup>47</sup> Wales A Vibrant Economy, Welsh Assembly Government 2005



4.24 Our Communities First programme exists to provide people in the most disadvantaged areas of Wales with opportunities to improve their own lives and the future of their communities. During 2008, the Communities First Programme evolved into its next phase, with an increased emphasis on delivering agreed outcomes for each Communities First area.

4.25 Communities First will place a renewed focus on Partnerships tackling issues to do with poverty and disadvantage, for example, income maximisation, improving employability and addressing child poverty. There is a close correlation between the local authorities with the greatest number of Communities First areas and those with the highest incidence of young people who are NEET.

4.26 Communities First Partnerships have established structures for engaging local people and working in partnership with statutory and third sector organisations. Many Communities First Partnerships have development workers dedicated to working with young people, including those who are NEET, or at risk of becoming so. Communities First Partnerships also have responsibilities to work with their local Children and Young People's Partnerships over strategic planning and co-ordination of resources to meet local needs, and with local Youth Service and other referral agencies.

4.27 Many factors may influence why a young person is NEET, and these cannot be addressed in isolation. Finding solutions will require close collaboration between statutory agencies, third sector organisations and the young people concerned. Communities First Partnerships offer a facility to encourage and sustain such collaboration, particularly in devising and taking forward initiatives in more informal, unthreatening settings.

## **Removing financial barriers to learning**

4.28 Understanding finances and managing money are important skills for young people. From September 2008, financial literacy education has been embedded in both the Personal and Social Education and Mathematics frameworks for ages 7 to 19 and 7 to 16, respectively. We have also announced a package, with the assistance of the Financial Services Authority, that will fund the establishment of a Welsh Unit for Financial Education, which will help support schools and teachers to deliver these changes. The Unit will first focus on supporting schools, but it will also look at more innovative outreach work that would better target and more effectively serve young people who are NEET.

4.29 Financial exclusion - be it from affordable credit, money advice, or products such as current accounts which many take for granted - is particularly acute for many young people who are NEET. Consequently, the National Strategy for Financial Inclusion, which we are currently developing, will incorporate the specific and particular needs of young people who are NEET.

4.30 We think that disparities between payment levels on national training programmes and education schemes may influence progression choices in ways that may not always be helpful. For example, young people leaving *Skillbuild* for a college option may face a reduction in income, because the Minimum Training Allowance is worth more than the financial support that they would receive in college. Better understanding of how different financial support mechanisms interrelate, and how they influence the choices made by young people, is critical if we are to ensure that resources can be more fairly, and more effectively, targeted. We will, therefore, review the range of financial support mechanisms offered in Wales to 16-19 year-olds.

4.31 The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) Wales scheme is designed to provide an incentive to young people from lower income families to continue and to remain in full-time education.

4.32 We are conducting a full evaluation of the EMA scheme in Wales, having regard to the impact of the scheme on those who do not qualify, as well as those who do. Our evaluation will investigate whether EMA is enabling at risk young people to enter education, employment or training, or whether it is simply deferring a NEET outcome for those same young people.

### Getting the incentives right

4.33 The welfare system influences the decision-making of many disadvantaged young people after they have left school. We know that losing benefits acts as a disincentive to move into employment or learning. At the very least, many benefit clients have the perception that they would be worse off working. Additionally, there is the issue that for young people who do progress into employment, there will be cases where their earnings contribute to the total household income, thereby impacting on the level of benefits and passported benefits for which their parents or guardians could be eligible. As *Skills that Work for Wales* makes clear, however, through the *Careers Ladders Wales* model, we are working closely with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), to deliver a flexible welfare system, coupled with integrated employment and skills support.

4.34 We need to make sure that there are clear incentives in place for all young people to re-engage quickly, should they become NEET. In normal circumstances, young people become eligible for Jobseeker's Allowance as soon as they reach the age of 18. However (unless they are in one of a small number of groups who qualify for early entry, such as ex-offenders and young people with disabilities) it is a further six months before they enter the intensive support regime of the New Deal. This is true even if they have been NEET for a considerable period before they reach the age of 18.

4.35 DWP made changes to New Deal from April 2008, to make sure that 18 year olds with any history of being NEET in the past can, by agreement with their Jobcentre Plus Personal Adviser, be fast-tracked to the gateway stage

of New Deal, on a voluntary basis. In addition, from April 2009, DWP will take this approach further, by making fast-tracking to Stage 3 of the new Jobseeker's Allowance Regime<sup>48</sup> mandatory for 18 year olds who have already built up a six-month period of being NEET.

4.36 As a consequence, young people under the age of 18 will know that every day spent being NEET will contribute towards moving them towards the New Deal regime. This will provide them with a clear incentive to re-engage as quickly as possible, whilst also ensuring that those who are NEET aged 18 will receive intensive support more quickly.

## Next Steps

4.37 This document has identified the main facts about young people aged 16-18 who are NEET in Wales, and has set out a comprehensive agenda for reducing the current numbers and reducing the flow of young people who are NEET, in years to come. The actions are summarised at Annex B.

4.38 This document has been published at a time of economic downturn, which will impact on young people who are NEET. For example, there may be a greater pressure on learning providers, as demand for places on courses grows as a result of a lower number of workplace opportunities. We will continue to monitor the impact on this group over the period of economic downturn, but this is a longer-term strategy, which must remain applicable when the economic situation improves. Welsh Assembly Government measures such as the ReAct redundancy support programme and the ProAct pilot scheme, providing training assistance to people in employment, together with the New Starts Apprenticeship Programmes, should help to mitigate any possible increase in the number of people in Wales who are NEET.

4.39 The Welsh Assembly Government will play its full part in taking forward a number of actions at the all-Wales level. But to meet our objectives, we need good, strong partnerships on the ground that will progress co-ordinated action to identify those in their areas that are at risk of being NEET, and take effective action to meet their needs and set them on the path of sustained learning and employment. The Effectiveness Frameworks, currently being developed and piloted, will provide a strong basis for this work.

4.40 Partnership is the key, but partnerships need leadership to be fully effective. We will therefore work to ensure effective co-ordination of policy nationally to support those who are NEET, and thereby strengthen the ability of Children and Young People's Partnerships and 14-19 Networks enabling them to identify a lead partner who will have co-ordinating responsibility for young people who are 16-18 and are NEET, within their area.

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<sup>48</sup> <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/welfarereform/noonewrittenoff/>

## Measuring the size of the NEET group needing support

Evidence suggests that the size of the NEET group which should concern us - in terms of those young people who might need additional targeted support and opportunities from government in order to progress towards the labour market - is considerably less than the headline figure. The Annual Population Survey (APS) is used in the estimate of the national NEETs level to apportion those young people not in education or training, by economic activity. The APS can also be used to provide estimates for a more detailed breakdown of those young people who are NEET.

In the absence of a national database of young people, it is not possible to directly count those who fall into the NEET categories that need support. We therefore provide an interim method for calculating this figure, using the APS to identify those who are unemployed for six months or more, and those who are inactive and require support. Using this method results in an estimate of 53 per cent of NEET individuals requiring support.<sup>49</sup> When applied to the national NEETs estimate, this results in an estimate of 6,500 NEET individuals requiring support.

In this note, NEET stands for 16-18 year olds not in employment, education or training. It includes those who are unemployed or economically inactive. The unemployed are those without a job, who are available to start work in the next two weeks, and who have been seeking a job in the last four weeks, or who are waiting to start a job already obtained, in the next two weeks. People who are economically inactive include those looking after the home or family; those who are permanently sick or disabled; and those who are inactive for other reasons.

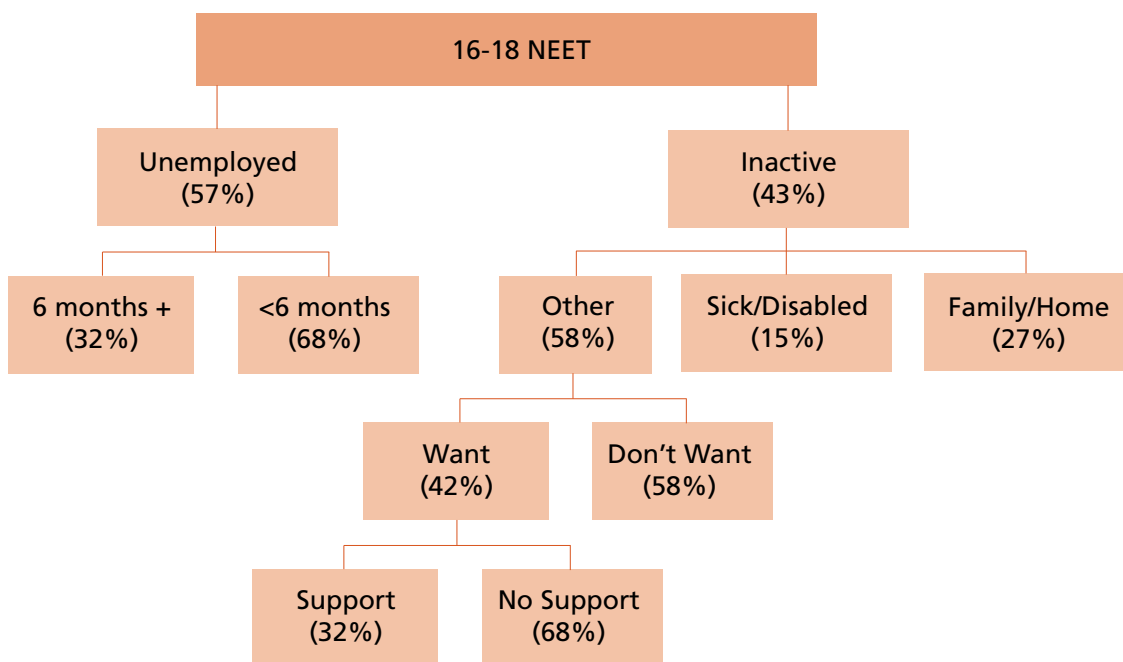
The number of NEET young people requiring support includes those who have been **unemployed for six months or over**; those who are inactive due to being **sick/disabled** or **looking after the family/home**; those who are inactive for another reason and **do not want to work**; and those who are inactive for another reason and **do want to work**, but require additional support to achieve this. This equates to 6,500 NEET individuals requiring support. The diagram below shows how this figure is arrived at, with the shaded cells indicating those who require support:

(a) Source: Annual Population Survey 2005 - 2007 (ONS)

<sup>49</sup> There are limits to this methodology: Young people 16-17 only have to register with JobCentre Plus if they are claiming benefits and these are only available to young people with specific hardship issues

This chart and methodology replicate that developed in *“More Choices, More Chances: A Strategy to Reduce the Proportion of Young People not in Education, Employment or Training in Scotland”*, Scottish Executive, June 2006. The split of *“Inactive”/“Other”/“Want”*, into requiring support or requiring no support is based on the split of unemployed into 6 months + and less than 6 months.

**Breakdown of 16 to 18 year olds not in education, training or employment in Wales - 3 year average 2005-2007**



## Action Plan

No.	Action from Delivering Skills That Work For Wales: NEETS	Timing
2a	Work with colleagues across WAG departments on coordinating services for people who are NEET and have other support needs i.e. around health social care and wellbeing, community safety or homelessness.	2009/10
2b	Issue revised guidance during 2009 for Keeping in Touch (KIT) arrangements currently set out in Annex 12 of the statutory Guidance on Extending Entitlement building on the lessons we have learned over the past six years.	2009-onwards
2c	Work with our partners to develop further methods for early identification and support for young people likely to become NEET, aimed at preventing them falling out of the system in the first place; this will include engagement with the School Effectiveness Framework.	The National Behaviour Attendance Review action plan is due to be released in March 2009. The action plan will be a 'live' document subject to regular amendment and ongoing consultation allowing for adjustment to current developments. It will contain short, medium and long term actions in response to the 92 recommendations. The first EOTAS data collection from local authorities will take place in 2010
2d	Work with our partners to improve data that is held locally about young people who are NEET.	Scoping study completion - 31/03/2009
2e	Develop a revised Statement of Arrangements setting out requirements for schools, colleges and training providers to communicate as soon as a young person disengages from training or education.	2010

No.	Action from Delivering Skills That Work For Wales: NEETS	Timing
2f	Monitor how effectively organisations share information for the benefit of young people and consider whether there is a need to strengthen our requirements upon them.	July 2010
2g	Develop, subject to approval, a new project funded via the European Social Fund which will help deliver against the main aspects of this document - systems, provision and support.	2009
2h	Work, through Careers Wales, with schools to provide more standardised delivery of Education Gateway and to make clearer the links and distinctions between post-16 Gateway and further WBL programmes.	2009
2i	We will work with Children's and Young People's Partnerships and 14-19 Networks to ensure that they identify a lead partner who will have co-ordinating responsibility for young people who are 16-18 and are NEET within their area.	2009
3a	Ensure that learners experience a greater range of learning opportunities in order to better match their needs and those of employers.	2009/10
3b	Legislate to place a duty upon local authorities, schools and further education institutions to co-operate in the delivery of a local options menu for young people and to deliver an enhanced entitlement for learners to the options, experiences and support that are part of their learning pathway.	From: Sept 2009 -Yr 10 Sept 2010 - Yr 10, 11 Sept 2011 - Yr 10, 11, 12 Sept 2012 - Yr 10, 11, 12, 13
3c	Take forward our Youth Enterprise Strategy and Dynamo role model programmes to help ensure young people develop the skills they need for work.	Jan 2009
3d	Investigate the reasons for low take-up of in-work training and employment by 16 and 17 year olds and develop new ways of promoting skills development and training to working young people and their employers.	2009/10



No.	Action from Delivering Skills That Work For Wales: NEETS	Timing
3e	Pilot a new programme to replace Skillbuild which will tackle the significant additional support needs that many young people NEET have before they are able to move closer to the labour market.	Jan 2009 to July 2010
3f	Support the continued development of service providers through our contract management and quality improvement processes.	Ongoing. New Quality & Effectiveness Framework to be phased in from autumn 2009.
3g	Work with our partners including Jobcentre Plus, Careers Wales, Sector Skills Councils and employers to improve the quantity and quality of job opportunities available to young people and tie this closely to the Careers Ladders concept outlined in Skills that Work for Wales.	2009/10
3h	Promote coordinated approaches across the voluntary and statutory service providers at a local level, to ensure education, employment and training providers link up with other specialist support agencies to provide for engagement with hard to reach groups, such as those who have homelessness, substance misuse or offending support needs, thus supporting them to access education, employment or training.	2009/10
3i	Work with providers to investigate flexible course start dates and learning offers.	Jan 2009
3j	Expand the Basic Skills Employer Pledge.	2008-2010 and beyond
4a	Continue to improve our approach to the support of pupils with additional learning needs through introducing and enhancing guidance and improved processes.	2009/10
4b	Continue to improve means of promoting minority ethnic achievement in education with new guidance on promoting race equality and cultural diversity within the curriculum and by reviewing the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant.	2009/10

No.	Action from Delivering Skills That Work For Wales: NEETS	Timing
4c	Continue to improve our strategic approach to the provision of information, advice and guidance for young people.	2009/10
4d	Continue the further development of a Learning Coach module specifically for supporting NEET and potentially NEET young people.	2009/10
4e	Work with young people themselves to help them develop ownership of and buy in to our future approach.	2009/10
4f	Develop a National Strategy for Financial Inclusion which will incorporate the specific needs of young people NEET.	Consultation on Strategy will commence February 2009; Strategy published in May/June 2009 4k
4g	Develop a guidance pack to support local partner agencies in delivering personal support to young people - helping them to overcome personal barriers which may prevent them from engaging in education, training or employment.	Draft for consultation early 2009
4h	Review the forms of financial support offered to 16-19 year olds, with a view to achieving greater parity.	2009/10
4i	Conduct an evaluation of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) scheme in Wales assessing ways in which to maximise the potential of the scheme to encourage engagement, retention and progression for young people at risk of becoming NEET.	2009/10
4j	Work with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to consider the impact of changes to Jobseeker's Allowance for 16 and 17 year olds in Wales.	The flexible New Deal is to be implemented across the UK from April 2009
4k	Work closely with DWP to consider the impact of the introduction of the flexible New Deal on young people in Wales.	The flexible New Deal is to be implemented across the UK from April 2009