



Northern Ireland
Executive

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Pathways to Success

Preventing exclusion and
promoting participation
of young people

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A Northern Ireland Executive Vision, Strategy and Action Plan

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MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

On behalf of the Executive, I am delighted to present this 'Pathways to Success' strategy, which is designed to address comprehensively the issue of young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

This strategy joins up actions being taken across the Executive to prevent young people falling into the NEET category in the first place with measures to re-engage those who have left school but are not in any other form of education, training or employment. It also sets out a number of key supporting measures to ensure that we can identify our young people's needs and match them with opportunities to meet those needs.

'Pathways to Success' has a particular focus on helping those young people who face barriers to participation, while also dovetailing with my complementary proposals to tackle the wider problem of youth unemployment in the current challenging economic context.

The NEET problem is a major social problem which, if not tackled, results in young people facing a lifetime of limited opportunity characterised by worklessness, poverty and ill-health, and passing severely reduced life chances from generation to generation.

It is also an economic problem: there are major costs to the public purse of young people remaining persistently trapped in the NEET category over the course of their lives. We cannot afford this haemorrhaging of vital resource to continue any longer.

And it is a problem too in limiting the extent to which our region can make the most of the opportunities offered by our fresh start politically. As a region, we have one of the youngest populations in Europe: this is potentially a major asset in boosting our competitiveness. It is critical that our young people get a good start in life and are not left behind in the way previous generations were held back by conflict, division and inequalities.

Our region has progressed economically in the context of relative peace: the rates of general and youth unemployment we have experienced have been lower than in many other parts of these islands and Europe. But the number of young people in the NEET category continued to grow even before the economic downturn. The Executive is determined to arrest this growth and to ensure that there are opportunities for all.

Our young people can and should be an asset to our region and its social and economic recovery. The consultation exercise carried out by my Department showed that the vast majority of them want to contribute positively to society. 'Pathways to Success' is intended to provide the best chance for all of them to be guided towards playing a full role in the life of our community and economy, with the skills our region needs for the future.

This cannot just be a school, a welfare or an employer strategy – it truly belongs to everyone in our society. Everyone has a stake and a role to play. The emphatic message of 'Pathways to Success' is that young people themselves have a stake and are part of the solution.

In taking forward the strategy we want to continue to work with young people and their representatives and add their voice to the process of delivery and implementation.

It is with a spirit of providing leadership, empowerment and bringing people together that I launch this strategy. I believe the work we have done so far in this regard augurs well for its future success. I am committed to ensuring that implementation and delivery will be characterised by the same strengths as we move forward. That is not just my commitment - the Executive has agreed this strategy as a key plank of its Delivering Social Change framework to achieve a sustained long term reduction in poverty and an improvement in children and young people's health, wellbeing and life opportunities.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Farry".

STEPHEN FARRY
Minister for Employment and Learning
(May 2012)

1. INTRODUCTION

DEFINITIONS

- 1.1** The issue of young people disengaging from education, training and employment is one that Northern Ireland has faced, in common with other regions globally, for many years. The term 'NEET', meaning young people not in education, employment or training, was coined during the late 1990s and is widely recognised internationally. When used inappropriately, the term can carry possible negative connotations. However, it has gained widespread currency and its use in this document is intended to facilitate more precise thinking and strategic decision making about young people who spend a substantial amount of time outside education, employment or training.
- 1.2** For the purposes of this strategy, it is helpful to consider three groups of young people for whom different types of Government intervention are appropriate:
- those under 16, where the focus is on work to prevent young people becoming NEET;
 - those aged 16 to 18 who are not at school, college or in training, including those who face specific barriers to participation, where the focus is on measures to re-engage young people with education and training; and
 - young unemployed people aged 18 to 24, who are unemployed or economically inactive and who may or may not be in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance or other benefits, where the focus is on engaging young people with employment opportunities.
- 1.3** In developing 'Pathways to Success', we have considered the three groups on an 'end to end' basis, from childhood all the way through to employment. There already exists a wide variety of existing public service provision to meet the needs of young people in all these groups, but one of the key issues identified through consultation was that the different programmes are not sufficiently joined up, leaving young people at risk of dropping out, particularly at key transition points. A main purpose of 'Pathways to Success' is, therefore, to help bring coherence to existing provision, while considering the need for new interventions to fill gaps, to signpost and to support young people in taking up the various programmes.

SCALE OF THE CHALLENGE

1.4 The best data currently available to quantify the NEET issue come from the (UK-wide) Labour Force Survey (LFS), which gives us overall NEET figures for young people aged 16-19 and 16-24, and also provides the basis for a comparative analysis with other parts of the UK, as set out in tables A and B below.

Table A - Percentage of 16-19 year olds not in full-time education, government supported training or employment

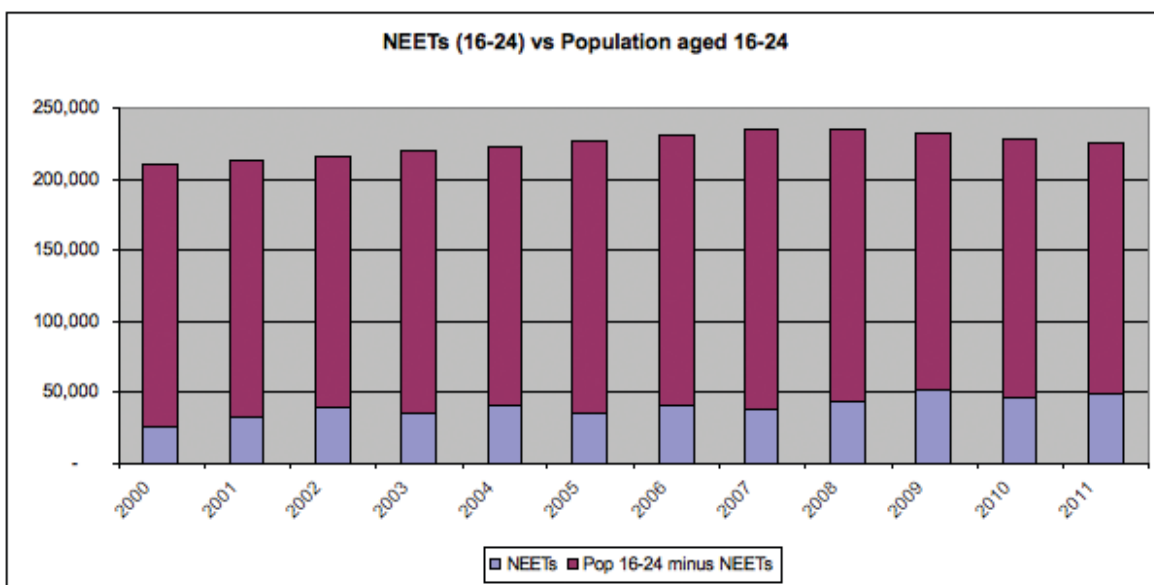
	%				
16 – 19	Northern Ireland	England	Wales	Scotland	UK
Oct-Dec 2011	14.3	14.2	26.3	14.3	14.8
Total 'NEET'	14,000	357,000	41,000	36,000	448,000

Table B - Percentage of 16-24 year olds not in full-time education, government supported training or employment

	%				
16 – 24	Northern Ireland	England	Wales	Scotland	UK
Oct-Dec 2011	20.5	18.6	28.0	19.2	19.2
Total 'NEET'	46,000	1,139,000	102,000	116,000	1,402,000

1.5 These, the latest LFS figures, begin to reveal the scale of the challenge. There are currently 46,000 16-24 year olds who are not in education, employment or training in Northern Ireland. This is up from 29,000 since the year 2000, and that equates to a rise of 59%. In the 16-19 year old category, the figure is currently 14,000, up from 9,000 in 2000, a rise of 56%.

1.6 The following graph illustrates the overall steady rise in the number of young people in the NEET category since the year 2000, set against the changing size of the overall 16 to 24 year old age group.



1.7 The fact that the number of young people who are NEET has increased both in absolute terms and as a proportion of the 16-24 age group both before and since the recession tends to indicate that the issue is a deeper structural one and not simply a product of the economic situation. The ongoing difficult economic conditions have in addition given rise to a significant increase in the numbers of people who are unemployed generally, impacting adversely on families across our society, bringing hardship to daily lives and uncertainty about the future. The conditions have hit young people particularly hard. Between November 2007 and November 2011, there was an increase of 155% in the number of 18 to 24 year olds out of work in Northern Ireland. Reflecting the pattern in many other parts of the world, the youth unemployment rate at 17% is significantly higher than the region's overall unemployment rate (6.7%). This represents thousands of blighted lives, which if not addressed in a comprehensive way will lead to long term consequences for individuals, their families and the local economy.

Characteristics/barriers of those in NEET Group(s)

1.8 Drilling deeper into these statistics, a scoping study conducted by the Department for Employment and Learning in 2010 showed how those young people in the 16-19 NEET age band could be further subdivided into three statistical subgroups in a way that assists the focusing of plans and interventions:

- those who are 'out of scope', for example young people on gap years or engaged in voluntary work;
- those with barriers to engagement; and
- those without barriers to engagement.

1.9 Barriers are characteristics of a young person's circumstances which may have been present from early on in a person's life and may have been subject to early intervention and prevention work. At age 16 in particular, the barriers may, for example, make the already difficult transition from compulsory schooling to further education, employment and training even more problematic, and can therefore result in the young person first entering the NEET category.

1.10 Young people who are not in education, employment or training and face barriers are, for the most part, young people who:

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

1.11 These characteristics are often not mutually exclusive and in many cases a young person will experience several of them simultaneously. In addition to this, the relationship between individual factors is also complex. Young people who are not in education, employment or training are not a homogeneous group and there exists a wide spectrum of problems and barriers which can be multiple and compounded, often from their earliest years. Some of these identified factors are likely to leave the young person needing additional support in order to make a successful transition to further education, training or employment.

SCOPE OF THE STRATEGY

- 1.12** We are not starting afresh in tackling these issues. All Departments have strategies and policies in place, or are working on their development, which have as their focus, the improvement of the life chances of individuals who are faced with disadvantage or barriers which prevent them leading productive lives or from reaching their full potential. To the extent that these will contribute to addressing the existing or future needs of those young people who are not in education employment or training, they have been referenced in this strategy. So that a comprehensive picture of the collective action of the Executive is provided, particularly relevant programmes and initiatives have been highlighted, even though they may be part of a wider strategy already being pursued by individual departments.
- 1.13** In addition, a number of new initiatives specifically designed to meet the needs of those young people, based on best practice elsewhere and reflecting views expressed by stakeholders in the consultation process, are to be introduced.
- 1.14** The main sections of the strategy which follows set out:
- a more detailed analysis of the social and economic context (Section 2);
 - steps to improve leadership, co-ordination and information (Section 3);
 - actions to prevent young people becoming NEET (Section 4); these include the Executive's major initiatives to improve early years provision and to raise standards in all schools, a range of health and social care programmes, and early and effective careers advice;
 - actions to re-engage young people in the 16-18 age group who are NEET (Section 5); these young people, particularly those with barriers as outlined above, are a key focus for this strategy, and it includes a number of new initiatives to signpost and support them towards and through opportunities to resume learning and progress into work;
 - actions to re-engage young unemployed people in the 18-24 age group (Section 6); this section of the strategy includes new measures designed to give young people who are old enough to be eligible for benefits opportunities for work experience and skills development in the current challenging economic context;
 - other supporting measures (Section 7); and
 - a detailed action plan for delivery of the strategy (Annex A).

- 1.15** The strategy has been informed by the Assembly Committee for Employment and Learning’s Inquiry into Young People not in Education, Employment or Training. This proved an invaluable source of advice as the strategy was being developed. It has been referenced throughout the document and a list of its recommendations and a description of how they are to be taken forward is provided at Annex B.
- 1.16** The strategy has also been informed by the findings of a detailed consultation exercise with stakeholders, including direct engagement with young people and the Department for Employment and Learning also carried out research directly seeking the views of parents on the draft. The strategy also takes account of experience internationally, European wide and the deliberations of the international conference, ‘Children in Conflict’, held in Belfast in March 2012. All of this has helped to inform the vision below, the thrust of the strategy and reinforced the need for an effective delivery mechanism and informed proposals for interventions.
- 1.17** **Our aspiration is that, by 2020, every young person will not only have an opportunity to access education, training or other preparation for employment but, to the extent that they are able, also avail of that opportunity.**
- 1.18** To that end, the strategy introduces a number of new initiatives within the context of wider existing and developing programmes of intervention. As a result, it represents a comprehensive programme of action to which the Executive as a whole will give leadership and drive forward in a concerted and co-ordinated way so that our young people are given the best possible opportunity to realise their full potential in future.

2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT – THE NEED FOR ACTION

- 2.1** As referenced by an Assembly research paper on young people not in education, employment or training, a young man who has not been in education, employment or training for six months by the age of 21 is more than four times more likely to be out of work, three times more likely to have depression and mental health issues, five times more likely to have a criminal record and six times less likely to have any qualifications.
- 2.2** So ensuring full participation by young people in education, employment or training represents one of the biggest and most crucial social and economic issues of our time.
- 2.3** It is not an issue solely for the Department for Employment and Learning. The underlying issues are multi-faceted, requiring concerted and co-ordinated action across a number of departments and their delivery agents. The voluntary and community sector also has a key role to play.

Social Context

- 2.4** Within the overall group of young people who are economically inactive is a cohort of young people who have left school early and who are not participating in employment or formal training provision. Their position has more to do with their personal and social circumstances than the prevailing economic conditions. Often from deprived backgrounds and enduring intergenerational loss of opportunity, they face particular barriers to accessing the labour market whether the economy is strong or weak.
- 2.5** The number of young people in this category – often described as NEET – actually rose over the last decade even when, in labour market terms, times were good and employment generally was growing. Some of the increase was probably due to a rise in the young population, but notwithstanding this, the period of labour market growth did not remove the problem and meant that Northern Ireland entered the downturn from 2007 with a growing number of people in this category.
- 2.6** The ‘Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report’, published in February 2012, compares the percentage of 16-24 year olds in the NEET category across UK regions. The figures show that Northern Ireland is not at the extreme and a study by the Assembly’s Research and Information Services (NEET 2010) concluded that, when it came to the numbers of young people in the NEET category, the region was not significantly better or worse off than elsewhere in the UK. However, young people in the NEET category were geographically concentrated in the most disadvantaged areas.
- 2.7** It is also likely that violence and communal divisions will have impacted negatively on economic prospects generally, and that this has contributed to a legacy of lower growth and hence fewer employment opportunities. The trauma associated with conflict has also had major damaging social impacts, and there is growing evidence that these are intergenerational.

- 2.8** These impacts have historically encouraged young people to move away from Northern Ireland, especially for higher education; and arguably generated feelings of hopelessness amongst some young people remaining which may have made them less likely to see the benefits of - and hence to undertake - education and training.
- 2.9** The negative impact of the NEET issue on our communities should not be underestimated. We have seen above that those in the NEET category are concentrated in our deprived communities. These are the communities that experience high levels of exclusion and bear the greatest strain in terms of material and social deprivation – neighbourhoods where joblessness is high and lives are blighted by lack of opportunity. It is hardly a coincidence that many of these communities were those that suffered most from violence, and that continue to experience segregated patterns of living and, to a significant extent, working.
- 2.10** These communities thus have a double challenge – they are not only having to deal with the social and economic hardships that other deprived communities across Britain, Ireland, and wider afield are dealing with – but they are also having to struggle with the legacy of decades of conflict and division. And they are doing this at a time when the economic and labour market conditions are far from ideal.
- 2.11** Addressing the needs of the young people in these neighbourhoods will be a prerequisite to helping move these communities on so that they can begin the long road to recovery. The Executive recognises that it has a responsibility here, and helping young people from all areas of Northern Ireland – but particularly those from areas which have not prospered in the past – will be essential if we are to avoid consigning a new group of young people to a cycle of joblessness and hopelessness.
- 2.12** A key way of countering this is through participation by these young people in meaningful and rewarding work, education or training (or a combination of these). But significant support for individuals and their families will be required to secure this goal.
- 2.13** There will thus be a pressing need to embed best practice evidence based interventions to address barriers to attainment and success, if the existing cohort of young people in the NEET category are to be assisted into the labour market, and others following them are to avoid similar life experiences. Tackling social disadvantage is therefore at the core of this strategy.

Economic Context

- 2.14** The Executive's Economic Strategy recognises that the most important asset for the regional economy remains our people and explicitly notes the importance of actions that will improve both the skills and employability of our entire workforce. The Strategy includes actions that will ensure we have a workforce able to respond to the challenges of the global economy as we seek to rebalance the Northern Ireland economy but also actions to address the impact of the global recession on the local labour market.
- 2.15** The Strategy recognises that our younger people have been particularly impacted by the economic downturn and notes that, by taking measures to reduce the exposure of young adults to sustained periods of unemployment, the Executive is working to improve their economic prospects and ensure that their knowledge and energy is retained for the good of the Northern Ireland economy.
- 2.16** Recognising the particular needs of those young people who are in the NEET category, the Economic Strategy includes a specific commitment to work across departments to tackle this issue. This NEET strategy is the practical outworking of that commitment.
- 2.17** There are strong economic reasons for ensuring that young people do not become detached from education and training and the labour market early in their working lives. The long term impact of disengagement on the individual is well documented – a lifetime of limited opportunity characterised by worklessness, ill health, low skills, benefit dependency and poverty. This, at the individual level, represents lost opportunity, unfulfilled potential and, at best, unused talent. But it also represents a loss to the economy directly in the cost of benefit dependency, and indirectly through the loss of economic capacity and skills that would otherwise be available to sustain economic growth.
- 2.18** As indicated in the previous section, prevailing economic circumstances have had a devastating impact on the employment prospects of our young people across the board:
- the number of young people who are not economically active has trebled in the last four years; and
 - youth unemployment has increased from just over one in ten to almost one in five in the same period.

- 2.19** Most economic forecasts, including those of the Office for Budget Responsibility which advises the Chancellor of the Exchequer, suggest that employment growth will be limited for the next year or two, and that unemployment will remain high. Even the most optimistic forecasts do not envisage unemployment falling to pre-recession levels in the short to medium term (i.e. before 2017). Although unemployment and economic inactivity rates reflect the general lack of employment opportunities in the market place in the downturn, other factors are also impacting.
- 2.20** Evidence suggests that employers have sought, in the downturn, to hold on to as many of their current employees as possible but they have also responded in other ways such as curtailing recruitment. This affects all prospective jobseekers, but disproportionately impacts on those who are trying to enter the labour market for the first time; in other words, on young people.
- 2.21** Without relevant recent work experience, all our young people, including those recently graduated, find it difficult to compete for the jobs that are available. The Executive has recently agreed measures to help young people to compete on a more equal basis with older, more experienced workers in a difficult labour market. Young people facing barriers need particular support in this context.
- 2.22** These measures link new interventions to the future skills needs of the economy. This is a vital step to prepare for the upturn in the economy. We need to develop the skills of our workforce as they can help to create the employment opportunities required to rebuild and rebalance the economy in line with the 'Northern Ireland Economic Strategy'.
- 2.23** Invest Northern Ireland (Invest NI) has also introduced the Jobs Fund, seeking to create 4,000 new jobs by March 2014, and the Department for Employment and Learning is working closely with Invest NI to maximise this opportunity. While it is anticipated that these jobs will concentrate on a range of sectors, there is a specific measure within the Jobs Fund to provide a business start grant to young people aged between 16 and 24 years who start a business.
- 2.24** If Northern Ireland is to be successful economically and socially we need to ensure all our young people have opportunities to engage early in the unemployment cycle to gain skills and employment to be successful for themselves, their families and the region. The right type of investment aimed at keeping young people close to the labour market will ensure that they have the opportunity to enhance and maintain their skill sets, and so be best placed to take advantage of the economic upturn when it comes.

Strategic Focus

- 2.25** In formulating this strategy, the Executive has taken the context above into account along with the thrust of other relevant cross-cutting strategies, listed at Annex C, and sought to make them more effective by linking them more closely. A fundamental guiding principle has been the issue of raising awareness of, and harnessing the individual and collective actions of a wide range of agencies. All of these factors have key parts to play in increasing the life chances and progression opportunities of our most disadvantaged young people.
- 2.26** In summary, what the Executive proposes through this strategy is a three tier package of measures to prepare the labour force now for the economy of the future. The three tiers are expressly aimed at:
- preventing young people missing opportunities for education and training, and/or becoming unemployed;
 - helping young people in the 16-18 age group, especially those facing barriers; and
 - assisting unemployed young people aged 18-24 more generally.
- 2.27** The actions by which this strategy will be realised are described in sections 3 to 7 and further detailed in the action plan at Annex A.

3. IMPROVING LEADERSHIP AND CO-ORDINATION

- 3.1** Improving the life chances of young people who are ‘NEET’ or likely to fall into the NEET category will depend on a range of preventative and engagement or re-engagement measures. These measures will be delivered not only by Departments and statutory agencies, but also by the voluntary and community sector. Local government and employers will also have a role to play. These measures will need to be properly co-ordinated if their effect is not to be diluted through fragmentation. They will also need to be properly targeted and linked within an overall programme of intervention which provides for individual progression.
- 3.2** This section addresses the fundamental issues of leadership and co-ordination of the programme of intervention. It also addresses the need to improve the information base available to all the stakeholders involved so that the actions can be targeted effectively at those most in need and continue to be informed by best practice elsewhere.

Improving co-ordination

- 3.3** A common theme that emerged throughout was the need for improved co-ordination of activity across the various stakeholders. This is not simply a structural issue; it goes to the heart of the overall effectiveness of the interventions and measures already in place. Without improved co-ordination there is a risk of continuing fragmentation of effort and of well intentioned activity without progression.
- 3.4** In its Inquiry report on this subject, the Committee for Employment and Learning concluded that:
- “The NEET strategy must be about co-ordination, co-operation, multi-agency working, referral and collective accountability. A NEET strategy will require all stakeholders to work together within a framework. The Executive Departments, the community and voluntary sector, the different sectors of education, employers and businesses – all have a role to play.*
- During this Inquiry the Committee has also become aware that it is not only the Executive Departments which often tend to work in what might be described as a ‘siloed’ fashion; there are community and voluntary organisations which appear to focus solely on their own work and do not see themselves within a framework where they share information and resources with others.”*
- 3.5** Tackling deep-seated issues of deprivation is very challenging. It requires high quality policy analysis and co-ordinated delivery of effective programmes, often over prolonged periods, which needs to be based on clear political agreement and commitment on policies across the Executive. It also requires close communication and collaboration with local government, the communities involved, voluntary and community organisations and with the private sector.

- 3.6** It is recognised that individual Executive Ministers and their respective Departments have core business objectives. They may find it difficult, therefore, to prioritise partnership working in that context, unless there is clear political agreement on the objectives of strategies, what is to be achieved and the respective roles of the different parties involved.
- 3.7** To provide for better co-operation and more effective cross-cutting partnership working, the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister has recently established the Delivering Social Change Programme.
- 3.8** The aim of the programme is to deliver a comprehensive and cross-departmental delivery framework to improve life chances and reduce deprivation, which will lay the basis for sustained social improvement and economic growth.
- 3.9** The Delivering Social Change framework aims to deliver the following two outcomes:
- (i) a sustained reduction in poverty and associated issues, across all ages; and
 - (ii) an improvement in the health, wellbeing and life opportunities of children and young people, thereby breaking the long-term cycle of multi-generational problems.
- 3.10** It is intended that outcomes will be achieved through the delivery of flagship projects and it is expected that, in relation to the children and young people programme, education and employability as well as early intervention will be considered in developing such projects. Young people in the NEET category should be seen as one of the key target groups for the Social Investment Fund which is aimed at tackling poverty and deprivation here and is one of the key programmes under the Delivering Social Change Programme.
- 3.11** The Delivering Social Change Programme will be led by Ministers through the Executive Sub-Committee on Poverty and Social Inclusion and the Ministerial Sub Committee on Children and Young People, both of which will be chaired by the Junior Ministers. These sub-committees will be supported by a Delivering Social Change Programme Board also chaired by Junior Ministers and comprising senior official representation from each Department and Special Advisers from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.
- 3.12** It is proposed that this strategy will be taken forward under the auspices of the Delivering Social Change Programme. This will provide the necessary political leadership and support to drive forward the implementation of the strategy across government in a concerted, co-ordinated manner.

- 3.13** The issues facing our young people are undoubtedly of a cross-cutting nature and require closer co-operation and alignment of resources and efforts. The finalised community relations strategy will have a renewed focus on the role of all our young people in building a united community. The strategy will seek to empower our young people to become positive role models within the community and will seek to tackle those issues that contribute to some of our youth becoming disengaged.
- 3.14** This will require a cross-departmental approach and through the implementation arrangements for the community relations strategy, it will be important that there are close linkages made with the NEET strategy and other initiatives that contribute to the development of our young people. There is also a particular need to work across departments in considering the findings and recommendations of the 'Review of Summer Interventions' to develop a strategic and longer-term approach to dealing with those times of the year when community tensions can be high.
- 3.15** To further provide for the necessary co-ordination, a NEET advisory group will be established comprising officials from the main departments involved, representatives from the voluntary/community, education and health and social care sectors, local government and the business sector. Specific arrangements will be established to provide for the engagement of the voluntary and community sector. The Department for Employment and Learning will lead this advisory group to take forward implementation of the strategy and action plan.

Voluntary and Community Sector

- 3.16** The voluntary and community sector plays a vital role in reaching those young people who are disaffected from institutions and mainstream provision. Many of these are only reachable by community organisations operating outside formal government agencies. There are many fine examples where such organisations are engaging effectively with young people on the ground and through innovative practice are making a difference to their lives. But as the Employment and Learning Committee recognised, these activities also need to be better co-ordinated.
- 3.17** In the development of this strategy, the Department for Employment and Learning helped establish a NEET Forum of community and voluntary organisations active in this field. This has proven extremely beneficial in informing the development of the strategy and in organising consultation events, including one with young people themselves.
- 3.18** **To ensure the voluntary sector voice continues to be heard, it is proposed to recognise formally this NEET Strategy Forum as part of the organisational arrangements for taking forward the strategy.**

3.19 This Forum in future will:

- provide better co-operation and integration of voluntary and community sector activity to address the NEET issue;
- act as a source of best practice advice on community initiatives, for example, on assessment of needs, mentoring and family support; this will include the promotion of accreditation and approval of standards;
- provide for better engagement and involvement of young people in developments and initiatives and
- consider the application of the empowerment principles developed by the European Social Fund (ESF) Learning Network to assist with overcoming the barriers found by ESF participants who are in the NEET category.

Engaging Business and Employers

3.20 The Department for Employment and Learning engages with the business sector, and employers more widely, on an ongoing basis to help ensure the development of workforce skills to meet the needs of the economy, and that business and Government are committed to working together to create employment. The business sector will be represented on the NEET advisory group outlined at 3.15 above, and employers will be closely involved in delivery of the new programmes outlined in detail in section 6.

3.21 Employers will have an important role in supporting and engaging with the community, voluntary and statutory sectors and in providing opportunities and support for young people of all ages and abilities and the Department for Employment and Learning will work in conjunction with Business in the Community to consider what more could be done to support the access of young people with particularly difficult problems, to the labour market.

Local Government

3.22 Local government has an important role in tackling the issue of young people who are NEET through economic development and through its diverse activities in relation to community safety, community development, place shaping and co-ordination of work with others. This includes multi-agency work to prevent anti-social behaviour, together with social economy and regeneration actions.

3.23 Under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, supplemented by the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (2002), local government is permitted to incur expenditure “for the purpose of taking such steps, as the council considers appropriate, for promoting the economic development of its district”. These could include steps to address the issue of young people who fall into the NEET category.

3.24 For example as part of its investment programme published in February 2012, Belfast City Council announced a specific programme to improve the employability prospects of young people in Belfast. We will explore the extension of this type of initiative to other parts of the region. This will be facilitated in part through local government representation on the NEET advisory group outlined at 3.15.

Co-ordination at operational level

3.25 The Executive's new arrangements to co-ordinate the Delivering Social Change Programme are outlined at sections 3.7 to 3.12. At an operational level, these structures are supported by the regional Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP), which was launched by the Health and Social Care Board in February 2011. This is a cross-sectoral partnership, consisting of the leadership of all key agencies who have responsibility for improving outcomes for all children and young people in Northern Ireland, including health, social services, education, policing and housing, as well as representatives from the voluntary and community sectors.

3.26 The overall purpose of the CYPSP is to lead the integrated planning and commissioning of support and services aimed at improving outcomes for children and young people, as set out in the Executive's ten year strategy 'Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge'. It will have a key role in co-ordinating implementation of a range of the preventative measures which are key to 'Pathways to Success'.

Improving Information

3.27 A prerequisite for ensuring that the strategy is successful is a sound information base which will not only provide for the measurement of outcomes, but which will provide the relevant information to allow stakeholders to target their intervention properly.

3.28 In developing this strategy, it has become clear that Northern Ireland does not have a comprehensive information system which would allow individuals in need of support to be identified and their progress to be tracked. We are reliant on the Labour Force Survey for basic information about the total number of young people who are NEET; this is a self reporting system and survey based and subject to sampling error.

3.29 The level and quality of information in Northern Ireland compares adversely to that available in England and Wales where there are several key relevant data sources, for example, the Client Caseload Information System, the Youth Cohort Study, research by the National Foundation for Education Research and the Statistical First Release. We have drawn on these data sources to help us define the needs of individuals in the NEET category in Northern Ireland, but if we are to be assured about the evidence base to support our interventions and be confident in the measurement of their effect, we need to put in place a robust information system for Northern Ireland.

New Tracking System

3.30 There is therefore a clear need for an identification and tracking system to be developed. The Department for Employment and Learning has, therefore, commissioned research to scope the potential for a Northern Ireland tracking system for those young people who are in or who might enter the NEET category. It is intended to have a tracking system in place by 2014.

3.31 Such a system will track a young person's progress and interactions with various government departments and agencies to allow all stakeholders to learn more about their particular client group and will have benefits for all concerned.

3.32 The research is investigating options that will allow the systematic collection and use of data to track young people as they move through key transition points, for example, from school to further education, training and employment. The central aim is to determine what is required to identify and track those who are NEET. These young people, by definition, tend to fall outside many current data collection systems.

3.33 The development of a tracking system will also support the early identification of young people who are, or are at risk of becoming NEET. It will also allow for the creation and maintaining of an up-to-date evidence base and the monitoring of progress in reducing the number over time. Until the system is in place, we will draw on emerging information from various sources including from the research study and information from the 2011 census to provide more robust information monitoring and measurement.

3.34 We will also wish to use information from schools as part of an early intervention strategy to identify young people early in their lives who are at risk of becoming NEET. The Department for Employment and Learning is also in the lead in encouraging the use of the Learning Records Service's Unique Learning Number across the education and training sectors in Northern Ireland. These measures will enable early targeted actions to be put in place to avoid young people falling between the cracks of provision at key transition points referred to above later in life.

Strengthened role for Careers Service

- 3.35** The Committee for Employment and Learning recommended that those developing the NEET strategy look at the possibility of the Department for Employment and Learning, through its Careers Service, acting as the repository for information regarding the interventions that young people have received, much as Careers Wales does in Wales. This proposal is being considered within the context of the development of the tracking system described above.
- 3.36** It is recognised that the Careers Service has a key role to play in supporting young people to develop effective career plans and signposting them to provision that meets their needs. To that end, the Careers Service, using information available from schools, colleges, providers of 'Training for Success' and other training programmes, will case manage those young people aged 16 and 17 who drop out of provision or do not have a positive destination when they leave school. In addition to this, work is underway to improve the flow of information between schools and the Careers Service to help identify young people at an early age who are at risk of becoming NEET.
- 3.37** There is no legal impediment to the Department of Education and schools sharing pupil information with the Department for Employment and Learning for the purpose of carrying out legitimate business. Work is consequently progressing to facilitate the electronic transfer of relevant data by December 2012.
- 3.38** The Assembly Committee recommended that the Careers Service should have access to all post primary pupils in Northern Ireland and that access should not be decided by the schools as this reinforces an inconsistent and unequal approach to the provision of careers advice and guidance. The Committee also recommended that Careers education should include the buildings of partnerships and stronger relationships with colleges, businesses, including greater use of exchange programmes.
- 3.39** The Careers Service has in place Partnership Agreements with virtually all post-primary schools to support them in delivering effective careers education, information, advice and guidance programmes and to enable all learners to become effective career decision makers. The Agreements detail information sharing arrangements and Careers Service provision, including the offer of group work and one to one guidance for all pupils in years 10 to 14. The Careers Service works with schools to identify at an early stage young people at risk of disengagement. Individual pupil referral is managed by schools. The Department for Employment and Learning will work with the Department of Education to examine how access to impartial careers guidance can be increased, particularly at the key decision stages at years 10 and 12.
- 3.40** The Careers Service recognises the benefit of engaging with partner organisations to increase access to young people and is continuing to develop partnership arrangements with relevant organisations.

Monitoring and Review

- 3.41** While the current lack of precise data makes monitoring and target setting difficult, its importance is recognised and actions are built into the strategy and action plan to allow progress and impact to be examined. These actions will also facilitate improved targeting as we move forward.
- 3.42** In order to ensure that the aspiration, structures and systems outlined above, and the specific preventative measures and interventions outlined later, are effective, an interim review of their effectiveness will be carried out in 2014.

Summary

- 3.43** In summary, in taking forward the proposals outlined above and to achieve our aspiration that every young person will not only have an opportunity to access education, training or other preparation for employment but, to the extent that they are able, also avail of that opportunity we will ensure significantly better co-ordination than there has been in the past to work to identify and meet the needs of young people as early as possible.
- 3.44** The proposals will provide for much more effective leadership and cross government co-ordination and targeting of activities, through better information, designed to prevent young people becoming NEET and to address the needs of those who are in that position. It will help avoid the 'silo' mentality across all providers and give effect to the collaboration that is essential to the effective addressing of this critical social problem.

4. PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

- 4.1** For many government programmes, early intervention provides an effective means to avoid more intensive intervention at a later date. This was an issue that was strongly emphasised in the consultation process, with many stakeholders advocating work with a much wider and younger age group than those currently categorised as those who are NEET.
- 4.2** In this section we outline the range of activities that will be pursued to reduce the numbers of young people who risk not being in education, employment or training in the future. By their nature, a number of these reflect existing strategies and programmes. Nevertheless their implementation should, over time, contribute to the improvement of life opportunities for young people at risk of becoming disengaged from education, employment and training.
- 4.3** In other cases they reflect specific initiatives designed to meet the needs of individuals with specific barriers or problems. Some existing and future examples of these types of interventions are included below.
- 4.4** Early interventions also involve a range of government services. Education is the key to ensuring that young people progress and engage further in education, employment or training. Of particular importance to addressing the needs of such young people are:
- early years provision;
 - measures to improve educational attainment and literacy and numeracy; and
 - raising standards in schools.
- 4.5** The further development and implementation of a number of cross-departmental strategies and initiatives designed to address the needs of vulnerable children and young people and tackle barriers associated with their health and general well-being are also important in helping reduce the numbers of young people who are NEET.

Early Years provision

- 4.6** The key existing early years programmes are **Sure Start** and the provision of **pre-school education**.
- 4.7** The **Sure Start** programme, delivered in partnership between the Department of Education and the Health and Social Care Board, works with parents and children, from birth to age 4, to promote the physical, intellectual, social and emotional development of pre-school age children to ensure they can flourish at home and when they get to school.
- 4.8** **Thirty-four Sure Start Programmes are targeted at the 20% most disadvantaged ward areas** and are available to all children age 0-4 within those areas. Sure Start offers support for parents with young families to help improve their life chances, laying firm foundations for the future.

- 4.9** Furthermore, the strong evidence of the influence of early childhood education and development on longer term outcomes is recognised and supported by **pre-school education** provision. **Every child in their final pre-school year is eligible for a free pre-school education place.**
- 4.10** These places are available in statutory nursery schools and nursery units and in voluntary and private settings, where in 2011/12; over **23,000 children were in funded pre-school provision.**
- 4.11** It is recognised that it will take some time for the positive benefits of these programmes to be felt. In the interim, and to provide a more direct focus on young people who are at significant risk of becoming disengaged, it is proposed to introduce a new initiative, the community family support programme, informed by best practice and recommended through the consultation process, which will provide more holistic support to their families.

Community Family Support Programme

- 4.12** This **community family support programme** will focus on the needs of the most disadvantaged families, to enable young people to re-engage with education, training or employment.
- 4.13** It is envisaged that the community family support programme will provide support including:
- tackling family issues such as support for parenting, role models, support for needs children may have and working with schools;
 - social and economic issues, including debt management, essential skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT, money management and how to look for work;
 - health and housing issues such as alcohol or drug abuse, co-working with health agencies, and issues around accommodation;
 - helping those who are in work to stay in work and those not to develop skills to find work; this will include writing CVs, preparation for jobs, timekeeping, and developing problem-solving skills; and
 - identifying suitable employment opportunities.
- 4.14** Such a programme will require involvement from a range of Departments, including Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Department of Social Development, Department of Education and the Department for Employment and Learning. The objective is to pilot it in 2013 and, subject to evaluation and resources, to roll it out across areas of deprivation. This initiative would support the development of hubs for resources for the child and family and the introduction of family support nurses. This work is being taken forward under the Delivering Social Change Children and Young People Programme.

Raising standards and improving outcomes in literacy and numeracy

4.15 Lack of educational attainment is a significant characteristic of young people who are NEET.

4.16 Young people who have been in the category for more than a year are ten times more likely to have no qualifications. The report from the Committee for Employment and Learning acknowledged the particular problem for Northern Ireland when it said:

“... while Northern Ireland has some notable successes in education there is also considerable underachievement in our education system. Serious issues were raised about an education system which sees so many young people leave compulsory education with few, if any, qualifications and who have such a negative attitude towards mainstream, structured education or training provision.”

4.17 To address low attainment, clearly a key root cause of young people ending up NEET, the Executive has prioritised the development of an education service that ensures that all our young people receive a high quality education which both enriches their lives and grows the economy.

4.18 The Programme for Government 2011-2015 underpins this when it commits to increase the proportion of young people who achieve at least five GCSEs at A* - C (or equivalent including GCSEs in Maths and English) by the time they leave school. This goal includes an increase in the proportion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds achieving at this level. The specific targets set for attainment are:

- **by 2015, 66% of school leavers achieving 5 GCSEs A*- C (or equivalent) including GCSEs in English and Maths (baseline 2008/09 of 58%); and**
- **by 2015, 49% of school leavers entitled to Free School Meals achieving 5 GCSEs A*- C (or equivalent) including GCSEs in English and Maths (baseline 2008/09 of 30%).**

4.19 The Programme for Government also includes a commitment to improve literacy and numeracy levels among all school leavers with additional support targeted at underachieving pupils.

4.20 The overarching policy for raising standards across all schools is **Every School a Good School** (ESaGS) – a policy for school improvement. The aim of this policy is to ensure that all children and young people are provided with a high quality education and are given every opportunity to fulfil their potential. Through this policy, the Department of Education will work to break the link between social disadvantage and educational underachievement by encouraging schools to set high expectations for their pupils and supporting, and where necessary challenging, schools to improve.

- 4.21** The policy centres on **six key areas** which all impact on the quality of education provided to our children and young people. These are:
- **effective leadership** and an ethos of aspiration and high achievement;
 - **high quality teaching and learning**;
 - **tackling the barriers** to learning that many young people face;
 - **embedding a culture of self-evaluation and self-assessment**;
 - **focusing clearly on support** to help schools improve; and
 - **increasing engagement** between schools, parents and families and the local community.
- 4.22** In support of these six key areas, there is in place an extensive range of support programmes: for example, outreach to local communities through the Extended and Full Service Schools programmes. Through these programmes, schools, working in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies, provide pupils and families from disadvantaged backgrounds with access to a range of integrated services, aimed at tackling barriers to learning and supporting pupils to achieve their full potential.
- 4.23** Literacy and numeracy skills are vital to the success of our children as they progress through school and beyond into further education, training and work and are key drivers for the future growth of our economy. The revised curriculum and assessment arrangements are centred on literacy and numeracy.
- 4.24** The strategy **Count, read: succeed – A Strategy to Improve Outcomes in Literacy and Numeracy** aims to support teachers and school leaders in their work to raise overall levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy among young people and narrow the current gaps in educational outcomes.
- 4.25** There is also recognition of the progress pupils make between various stages of their education. New assessment arrangements will enable the clear expectation that all pupils will progress by at least one Level of Progression between each Key Stage.
- 4.26** ‘**Count, read: succeed**’ includes **challenging targets** to increase the proportion of school leavers achieving level 2 qualifications in literacy and numeracy that are increasingly recognised as essential for individuals to function effectively in society and to gain employment.
- 4.27** The revised curriculum will provide pupils with a broad and balanced education. It focuses on developing the skills and dispositions young people need for life and work. At its core are literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT), as these are the skills young people need to access learning and to function effectively in the workplace and all aspects of life.

- 4.28** The Department for Employment and Learning and Department of Education are developing a joint document to describe how they will implement their respective policies and programmes for 14 to 19 year olds in a coherent manner, both to maximise the benefit to young people and to make the best use of the resources that are available to both Departments. The Executive is committed to the development of a highly skilled, flexible and innovative workforce, which will contribute to the twin goals of social inclusion and economic success. As well as implementing existing policies in a more co-ordinated and joined up manner, this work will also identify and resolve any inconsistencies between policies and identify gaps in provision. Planning of post-14 and post-16 provision within areas will take account of the nature and availability of FE provision and avoids unnecessary duplication.
- 4.29** Both the Department of Education and the Department for Employment and Learning are committed to ensuring that every young person has the opportunity, through the education and training system, to fulfil their potential.
- 4.30** Central to this is ensuring that educational standards, and the level of qualifications achieved, are improved for all learners in the 14 to 19 age group, including in the important areas of literacy and numeracy. A key principle is that learner progression is built into all curricular provision.
- 4.31** Both Departments recognise that better value for money can be achieved through reduced duplication and the best use of existing resources. In particular this will be achieved through collaborative planning of the school, Further Education (FE) and training estate.
- 4.32** Collaborative arrangements between schools and FE Colleges are continuing and schools are encouraged to avail of high quality courses on offer by FE Colleges delivered in state of the art facilities and led by industry experts. Under the Entitlement Framework, one third of the curriculum offer available to pupils must be general; one third must be applied, while the remaining third is at the discretion of the school. Underpinning the myriad of choices open to young people from Key Stage 4 is the need for access to high quality careers education, information, advice and guidance.

Business Education

- 4.33** Activities in business education are designed to provide pupils with an insight into the world of work and help them develop the appropriate employability skills. Many of these programmes involve either direct or indirect engagement with employers and provide pupils with valuable information thereby enabling them to make informed careers decisions.
- 4.34** These activities include enterprise and employability programmes, including entrepreneurship, work experience placements, company visits, careers events and programmes in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) to encourage pupils to see the potential career benefits of pursuing STEM related subjects to GCSE and beyond.
- 4.35** By their nature, these activities are delivered using an alternative practical approach to learning. This alternative approach is intended to motivate and excite pupils, including those likely to become disengaged, thereby having a positive influence in preventing them from becoming disillusioned with school and dropping out.
- 4.36** In addition to these universal programmes, a number of initiatives which are particularly relevant to young people who are in the NEET category are being taken forward which will address barriers to learning.

Overcoming Barriers to Learning

- 4.37** The Executive is also putting in place a range of policies and programmes aimed at supporting schools in intervening early to tackle the barriers that may prevent young people from fulfilling their potential or put them at risk of dropping out. These policies apply throughout the years young people are required to be at school. These include:
- Research to understand differential educational achievement within and between areas of multiple deprivation;
 - a new strategy for special educational needs and inclusion, supported by a programme to ensure teachers have the skills to support most pupils with learning difficulties and other special needs combined with external supports where necessary from the Education and Library Boards;
 - arrangements for education otherwise than at school that promote equity and accountability for the outcomes achieved by pupils;
 - the development of a Pupils' Emotional Health and Wellbeing Programme which will support all schools to proactively promote pupils' wellbeing as part of their raising standards agenda; and
 - the development of new and innovative approaches to promote regular and sustained attendance at school.

Further and Higher Education

- 4.38** A range of measures are in place in recognition that young people who enrol on further education provision may require encouragement, motivation and support to complete their studies. In particular, the current funding system ensures that all 16 to 18 year olds have access to free further education. Additionally, a number of specific schemes are available to assist and support young people whilst at college. For example, students who are 19 years of age or over (and those under 19 who are living away from home) may apply for a FE Award which provides a means tested maintenance grant to help with living expenses and, where appropriate, childcare costs; the Care to Learn Scheme also provides childcare support for students, aged under 19 at the time of enrolment, who are young parents and meet the required criteria. Students under 19 living more than three miles from their local college can receive free transport to and from their place of education; further support is available on a means tested basis, through free meals and assistance towards the costs of clothing in relation to their course of study. A Hardship Fund, for students aged over 19, is also available to provide assistance with fees, books and equipment and living costs
- 4.39** Aside from this financial support, colleges also help their students to address a range of other barriers that could disrupt their learning. As part of their pastoral arrangements for example, colleges support learners. Colleges work with a range of agencies to address issues such as drug and alcohol abuse, homelessness and mental health. Colleges also work in effective partnerships with Health and Social Services Trusts to support young people in care or leaving care, to be able to access courses that suit their needs. They also have ongoing contact with the Samaritans, the Housing Executive and Citizen's Advice to assist learners who are experiencing mental health, homelessness and debt issues. Learner retention and achievement rates are key indicators of success for colleges, and they will continue to develop innovative ways to encourage their learners to stay at college and to achieve.
- 4.40** In addition, since mainstream FE courses may not be suitable for everyone, colleges collaborate with special schools and adult day centres to provide discrete courses for young people with severe learning difficulties. Such provision may be delivered on college premises, at a day centre, or other suitable premises. Further education is however not suitable for every young person, with severe learning disabilities, particularly those for whom nursing and other personal care may be required.

- 4.41** The Department for Employment and Learning provides a range of financial support to assist colleges to discharge their responsibility towards students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enrolled in FE provision. Funding for such students is incorporated within the FE Funding mechanism, to ensure colleges are able to meet the costs of students with a learning difficulty and/or disability who may require an extra level of support. In addition, the Department also provides FE colleges with additional earmarked funding, of £3.5m, through the Additional Support Fund; £1.5m is allocated to colleges to help meet the cost of technical and personal support for all Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (SLDD), with £2m allocated to help meet any additional costs arising from the provision of discrete courses for those students unable to access mainstream provision.
- 4.42** The Higher Education (HE) strategy makes several recommendations on retention and pastoral care for all students in higher education. These include; improved content and delivery of information for prospective students; a supportive learning environment; the development of a Learner Agreement; and rural access to higher education resources. This is complemented by the ‘Widening Participation’ strategy’s recommendations on raising aspiration and attainment.

Tackling Barriers associated with health and social well-being

- 4.43** As highlighted in paragraph 1.10, young people who are NEET are particularly likely to have experienced barriers associated with their health, family circumstances and general wellbeing. The remainder of this section focuses in particular on provision designed to achieve the best possible outcomes for:
- children and young people in care; and
 - young people’s general health and social wellbeing.

Care Experienced Children and Young People

- 4.44** The Executive’s key commitment for young people with experience of care, who are at particular risk of becoming NEET, is to **improve outcomes for young people in care so that we at least double the proportion of those leaving care who are in employment, education or training at age 19.**
- 4.45** This will be achieved through a range of measures including the **Sixteen Plus Services** that are operational across all Health Trusts with a remit to support young Care Leavers aged 16-21, primarily, and those in training and education, up to age 24.
- 4.46** Support provided will include the assessment of needs, planning of pathways and review. Inherent in all Sixteen Plus Services are services dedicated to developing employability. These services provide a core infrastructure for addressing individual needs and a resource to develop a range of networks and options that will provide young people with enhanced opportunities for education, training and employment.

- 4.47** Sixteen Plus services will work, for young people pre-sixteen, with schools, Looked After Children education services, carers and the Careers Service to ensure more seamless and timely planning.
- 4.48** The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, the Department for Employment and Learning and Leaving and Aftercare Northern Ireland have also issued regional guidance to promote positive outcomes in education, training or employment for young people leaving care. This sets out service arrangements for improving the education, training and long term employment options for young people in care, with the aim of redressing the negative outcomes of many young people who experience care.
- 4.49** Progress is also being made in the development and delivery of initiatives under “Preparation for Adulthood” to support carers and Looked After young people aged 13-15 to prepare better for adult life. The appointment of dedicated Preparation and Lifeskills (PALs) workers is targeted towards capacity building with carers and delivery of theme based group work programmes to young people in partnership between statutory, voluntary and community partners.
- 4.50** These interventions are aimed at supporting young people’s personal and emotional development and strengthening resilience and better preparing young people for the realities of adult life.
- 4.51** Ensuring that young people leaving care aged 16-18 maintain their participation in higher and further education involves work to provide stable secure relationships. It also requires improved engagement of Looked After Children and young people in special interests, leisure and extra-curricular activities aimed at supporting them to integrate into the community, as well as diversionary activities. Care plans will also specify education and training requirements as agreed with the young person and the development of Personal Education Plans for all looked after children in school and training.
- 4.52** Through the Fostering Network, the scheme “Fostering Achievement” targets the educational attainment of young people in care and foster care through a range of initiatives, for example, training of carers, and additional tutoring and support to assist young people achieve in GCSE and Essential Skills qualifications. The scheme also affords additional support to those who require particular equipment for study, or wish to pursue particular interests or hobbies.

Young people’s General Health and Social Wellbeing

- 4.53** The delivery of ‘Pathways to Success’ will be complementary to the development and implementation of the ten year cross-Government **public health strategic framework**. This framework will set out the interventions needed at earlier life stages and the range of outcomes to be achieved to address the health and well-

being needs of young adults.

- 4.54** As the earlier scoping study indicated, young people with mental health conditions, sensory impairment, learning disability, physical disability, experiencing abuse or those with caring responsibilities all face difficulty in gaining employment, accessing training or remaining in education.
- 4.55** The Executive is currently developing a new Mental Health and Wellbeing Promotion Strategy, and it will acknowledge the need for specific interventions targeted at people of working age, with a particular focus on people who are unemployed. This will include the 16 -24 age group. The evidence is that unemployment can adversely affect the mental health of people at all ages within the working age population.
- 4.56** In addition, the suicide rate in the most deprived areas is almost three times that in non-deprived areas, and for the period 2005-09, 37% of all suicides involved persons between the ages of 15 to 34. The highest hospital admission rate for 2003-07 for self-harm is within the 15-24 years age group. The Northern Ireland Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan “Protect Life”, an updated version of which is due for publication in May 2012, acknowledges that in the long term a reduction in the suicide rate depends on successful implementation of a wide range of cross-departmental policies such as those addressing low educational attainment, deprivation, unemployment, and social exclusion.
- 4.57** The ability to communicate effectively is a vital skill for every child or young person in their home, school and social lives. Without good communication skills, children may never develop to their full potential. Children with communication difficulties are likely to have lower academic attainments and may have restricted employment opportunities in later life. The Speech, Language and Communication Therapy Action Plan: Improving Services for Young People (2011/12-2012/13) contains a number of actions to address these issues through early intervention. It includes an action to “develop a speech, language and communication care pathway for children and young people who are not in education, training or employment and for young offenders”.
- 4.58** The Department for Employment and Learning’s Disability Employment Service (DES) provides a range of programmes and services to help people from age 16 upwards with disabilities and health conditions to prepare to find work and, if successful, to retain their job. DES services are accessed through Employment Advisers (EAs) based in Jobs & Benefits Offices and Jobcentres. The Department’s Occupational Psychologists assist EAs by offering consultancy, advice and guidance in areas relating to work, disability and health. DES has a range of existing programmes to assist people with health conditions and disabilities and will be introducing the Work Connect programme shortly to assist people identify barriers to finding work and to help overcome these barriers to try and find a suitable job.

5. RE-ENGAGING 16-18 YEAR OLDS

- 5.1** The Department for Employment and Learning currently provides a wide range of programmes to help young people prepare for work. This includes:
- full or part-time education at school or further education colleges – a means tested allowance (educational maintenance allowance) is available (up to £30 per week) to incentivise participation at school or college post 16; (this is currently under review, with the intention of targeting support where it will make most impact on meeting need and encouraging participation);
 - the Training for Success (TfS) programme – this is unique to Northern Ireland, in that it offers a guaranteed training place for every 16-17 year old who is not in education, employment or other training/apprenticeship scheme; individuals on this scheme receive a weekly allowance, non-means tested, of £40 per week; among other strands, the scheme includes a strand “Skills for Your Life” which is targeted at those young people who need support and assistance to enable them to progress to qualification focused training. Essential Skills qualifications are embedded across all TfS provision. TfS has extended eligibility for those with a disability up to the day before their 22nd birthday and current specialist support providers such as Disability Action, Sensory Learning Support and the Cedar Foundation, are available to work in conjunction with suppliers delivering these programmes;
 - Essential Skills qualifications, delivered through FE colleges, designed to build up basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT to a level of competence that increases the employability of the young person; these essential skills are the foundation stone for all skills development and training; these courses are provided free of charge and delivery is flexible, so that the needs of the young person can be met; Essential Skills courses are designed to help the learner gain or regain confidence and respect in their own ability;
 - apprenticeship programmes, where apprentices receive structured training while being employed and paid by employers; and
 - a range of community and voluntary sector programmes largely financed by a mixture of ESF and statutory sector matching funds to help young people prepare for the labour market. A number of projects with a particular focus on NEET young people have secured funding totalling some £10m under the 2007-13 ESF Programme. The Programme seeks to support at least 4,500 participants from the NEET group over its lifespan in projects seeking to re-engage them with learning and employment opportunities. Work is currently at the design stage on the 2014-20 ESF Programme. It is expected that re-engaging young people who are NEET will continue to be a key priority.
- 5.2** While it is clear that, although the Department for Employment and Learning provision is comprehensive and the overall level of activity is demand led, current provision may be failing to meet the needs of some of our most vulnerable young people. The consultation exercise and the Assembly Committee Inquiry highlighted in particular the importance of effective signposting and the key difference a mentoring approach can make to ensuring young people become and remain engaged throughout the progression from education to employment and training.

Signposting

- 5.3** Signposting has been identified as a key component to ensure young people have clear progression routes. Section 3 has outlined how the role of the Careers Service will be enhanced. Others, including those working in voluntary and community sector organisations, also play important roles, particularly with those who have disengaged or at risk of disengagement. It is therefore imperative that those providing guidance and information have a robust base of information to provide this service. Without this, there is a risk that young people can repeatedly move through provision that does not offer progression.
- 5.4** An important action, to be taken forward in 2013, will be to undertake an audit of all provision. Mapping services will enable more effective identification of progression routes to meet the needs of each young person. This will also facilitate a continuum of provision to be identified to enable young people to avail of services in a timely manner, particularly for those at risk of disengagement.

Mentor Approach

- 5.5** Our children and young people do not necessarily always lack support: what they can often lack is continuity of support that ensures they reach their full potential. A ‘mentor’ approach has emerged as one of the most effective tools and is where, appropriately, the voluntary and community sector can often make an important and substantial contribution. Depending on the individual young person’s starting point and circumstances, this is likely to involve a personalised series of co-ordinated interventions, each moving the young person closer to employment, education or training.
- 5.6** This approach is supported in the Employment and Learning Committee’s Inquiry report where it indicated that it would like to:
- “..ensure that the pivotal role of mentors/Key Workers/Support Workers is deeply embedded within the systems of the strategy.”*
- 5.7** Taking account of these key findings from the consultation exercise and the review of international best practice, we propose to introduce four key new measures for 16 to 18 year olds as a key part of this strategy.

New measures for 16 - 18 year olds

- 5.8** While all of what follows is intended to be in addition to existing provision, many programmes and strategies, such as Essential Skills provision, the Training for Success programme and courses at further education colleges are also highly relevant, in addition to the role of the Careers Service. The programme envisaged will consist of four key new measures to assist those young people with barriers who are furthest away from the labour market. The four new measures, which have as key features arrangements for better signposting and mentoring of young people, are:
- a **community based access** programme;
 - further promoting the development of **individual action plans**;
 - the introduction of a **training allowance** for young people participating on existing ESF programmes targeted at those who are NEET; and
 - the development of an **innovation fund** to test new approaches based on sound evidence.
- 5.9** The **community based access** programme will engage and mentor young people using community and voluntary sector organisations, which are more readily able to engage with people who are distant from learning and the labour market.
- 5.10** It is envisaged that the community and voluntary sector organisations would support young people in engaging or re-engaging with learning and in progressing through mainstream training provision into employment. They would continue to provide support to keep the young person in training or employment and help them deal with any issues which arise which could, potentially, make the individual drop out.
- 5.11** The programme would therefore:
- encourage the “hardest-to-reach” young people to enter further education or mainstream training;
 - provide tailored mentoring and support to enable participants to successfully complete training and remain in employment;
 - develop partnerships between non-statutory organisations and training organisations, which recognise respective strengths and reduce any replication of services; and
 - test arrangements for formal collaboration between training organisations and non-statutory bodies

- 5.12 The promotion and further development of individual action plans** (already in operation in Training for Success and further education programmes) means that a young person can have a personalised plan which identifies his or her individual starting point and needs, and can plot a pathway through education or training to employment; this will be introduced for 16-18 year olds participating in the community based access programme.
- 5.13** As outlined at 5.2, most of the programmes available to young people aged over 16 offer some form of financial assistance to help with the costs of living and provide an incentive for participation. Such a payment has not typically been made to date to young people participating on programmes funded under the ESF, and this anomaly was highlighted in the consultation exercise. **We now plan to introduce a training allowance** for young people participating on existing ESF programmes targeted at those who are NEET. This allowance will be designed to ensure that there are effective incentives in place for young people to progress from provision which re-engages them with learning and develops basic skills to education and training programmes which provide the skills and qualifications to support moving into and success in work.
- 5.14** Finally we intend to develop **an innovation fund** to test new approaches based on sound evidence. The Innovation Fund would be aimed at piloting a range of other approaches to re-engaging those young people in the NEET category.
- 5.15** This could facilitate further testing of approaches such as a work based mentoring service, primarily with small employers, aimed at disengaged 16-17 year olds not participating in Training for Success.

Youth Provision

- 5.16** Youth work is an important part of a coherent package of education services for all children and young people. Work is underway to finalise a new policy for the Youth Service which will clearly align the policy and support for youth work in education with wider education priorities. This will improve the focus of youth work on targeted provision to help meet the needs of specific groups of young people who may be at greater risk of social exclusion, may be marginalised or isolated or at risk of achieving poor educational outcomes.

6. RE-ENGAGING 18-24 YEAR OLDS

- 6.1** The measures proposed for this age group specifically in this paper are in addition to the range of provision already delivered by the Careers Service and Employment Service, contracted providers, including those from the voluntary and community providers and further education colleges. The focus is on early intervention for young people aged 18 to 24, who have reached the age where they may be eligible for social security benefits. The specific aim of the intervention is to help this group gain work experience, develop additional skills and to achieve recognised relevant qualifications needed by those sectors that have the potential for future growth, both in terms of jobs and Gross Value Added (GVA). This work will contribute to rebuilding and rebalancing the economy in line with Programme for Government commitments. For the first time, young people will be able to avail of work experience to enhance their employability skills and prospects of employment while at the same time claiming unemployment benefit. The new measures set in the context of existing provision are described below.
- 6.2** For some time, interventions by the Department for Employment and Learning's Employment Service have been designed to help those most distant from the labour market. In other words our interventions have been designed in the pre-recession context to help the "hardest to help". All of those interventions remain in place and most of Employment Service expenditure, which this year (2011-12) will be in the region of £100 million, is invested in back to work support for those in most need of that support.
- 6.3** Since 2008, Employment Service interventions have been expanded to meet the needs of the more diverse client base brought to its offices by the difficult economic climate. For example, the Graduation Acceleration Programme was introduced in 2009 to assist unemployed graduates. At the same time, we continued to add investment for those experiencing the greatest difficulties in finding work. For example, the Step Ahead strand of the Steps to Work programme provided vital work experience for those unemployed for over 30 months.
- 6.4** Given the significant increase in youth unemployment it is proposed to introduce a range of new measures.
- 6.5** The design principles underpinning the proposals are that all measures proposed are additional; are designed to link social and economic policy (employment as the best route out of poverty for most people and skills development is essential for economic recovery); and that no young person should be left behind.
- 6.6** While operational arrangements will be worked out in detail, for 18 to 24 year old working age benefit claimants from the point of claim, we propose to put in place the following additional measures:

Diagnosis of Need (First 4 to 6 weeks of a benefit claim)

6.7 Building on the work the Employment Service does already, we will provide an initial detailed diagnosis of need, including the development of basic “employability” skills such as CV building, application writing, interviewing skills, etc. This diagnosis will include identification of young people with characteristics of those who are NEET, with a view to referral to immediate support. The diagnosis will be delivered by staff from the Employment Service in individual and group settings. Staff have received training in these skills and further development is planned.

Gaining Experience (Weeks 5 to 13 of a benefit claim - 2 to 8 weeks' work experience)

6.8 Lack of work experience is the single biggest barrier to work facing young people. Early opportunities for the job ready to experience the world of work will be offered through volunteering opportunities in charitable organisations and through a new 2 to 8 week Work Experience Programme brokered by the Employment Service.

6.9 While this will be delivered primarily in the private sector and social economy, it will also include potential for public sector opportunities. Participation in these schemes will be voluntary and participants will retain benefit entitlement and will continue to be subject to the conditionality regime attached to their benefit.

6.10 Participation will provide opportunities for young people to further develop employability skills and allow them to trial particular types of work to determine future suitability. Initially 1,000 placements, rising to 3,000 per annum by 2014/15, will be offered. The key purpose is to connect young people with the labour market at an early stage.

Skills Needs Assessment (Weeks 5 to 13 of a benefit claim)

6.11 On completion of the placement, young people will be offered further careers advice from a qualified Careers Adviser to identify possible further training opportunities. This will take the form of an individual one-to-one interview and personal assessment to determine current skills and competences.

6.12 Many of these young people will already be known to the careers advisers and we will build on this established relationship to support the young person through the next stage of their career progression.

6.13 An important feature of this measure will be to ensure that accurate labour market information is used to make young people aware of the opportunities available in various sectors and to stimulate interest in priority skills sectors by facilitating employer-led careers workshops.

Sector Based Skills Development (From week 14 of a benefit claim - further work experience with a flexible 6 to 9 month training opportunity)

- 6.14** A new Youth Employment offer will include additional sector-specific work experience, flexibly blended with skills training. Fundamental to this approach will be opportunities for young people to achieve additional, and build on any existing, relevant qualifications in the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).
- 6.15** This will be coupled with further work experience in sectors identified as having potential for future jobs growth. The Department for Employment and Learning has recently agreed the priority skills sectors including those with jobs growth potential such as tourism, engineering, manufacturing, health and life sciences, and the creative industries.
- 6.16** The Department for Employment and Learning will determine the needs and opportunities in detail at a local level, source work placements and provide relevant training opportunities locally to allow young people to prepare for future job opportunities. This spatial approach will allow for a more specific intervention and better targeting of resources. We will offer, initially, 400 work placements coupled with training opportunities, rising to 1,800 places a year by 2014/15.
- 6.17** In addition given the regional importance of our two main urban centres (Belfast and Londonderry) and the work experience opportunities presented by events like the UK City of Culture 2013, Titanic centenary etc. city initiatives will be developed for both locations.
- 6.18** This programme will last between six and nine months and will combine relevant work experience with an employer, alongside training with a college or training provider.

Employment Opportunities (available at any time from the date of a benefit claim)

- 6.19** Employers offering full time jobs to young people in the priority skills areas will be able to avail of an enhanced employer subsidy provided they allow the young people to continue with their skills development to gain a qualification while in employment.
- 6.20** We will offer 800 subsidies initially, rising to 1,200 by 2014/15. If an employer offers a young person an apprenticeship, the full range of support for apprenticeship training will be available. Apprenticeship training can take up to 3 years to complete. Apprenticeships are important in terms of future economic development.

- 6.21** In overall terms the proposal for this age group aims to deliver 6,000 work experience and training opportunities over the next 3 years (2012-15) and is comprised of the following:
- enhanced support through improved diagnosis of skills needs and additional adviser time from both the Employment and Careers Services;
 - Immediate additional referral and support for young people who have barriers to participation;
 - 3,000 short 2 to 8 week work experience placements over the next 3 years, designed to ensure early engagement with the labour market;
 - new employer subsidies in sectors which have the potential to help rebuild and rebalance the economy; provided employers agree to facilitate and enable further skills development;
 - additional training places coupled with additional sector based work experience in sectors which have the potential to help rebuild and rebalance the economy.
- 6.22** This scheme is additional to provision that is already in place for young unemployed people. The key additional elements include:
- early intensive diagnostic of employability skills;
 - opportunity for “taster” work experience for clients while on benefits;
 - individual skills/careers focussed assessments;
 - sector based work experience and training in areas of skills shortage;
 - an employer subsidy for up to one year (currently 6 months);
 - a new emphasis on continuing skills development and growth;
 - earlier intervention than is currently offered, skills development can begin after 13 weeks of a benefit claim rather than at 26 weeks which is the current mandatory trigger for entry to Steps to Work for 18 to 24 year olds.
- 6.23** The scale of provision (3,000 places in the short work experience scheme and 3,000 places in the sector based skills development component) is set in the context of the overall size of the target group which is around 18,000. These measures, coupled with existing provision, will result in a comprehensive range of support for the target group.

Engagement of Employers

- 6.24** Creating work placement and employment opportunities for young people, as outlined above, will depend on the commitment of a large number of employers. The Department for Employment and Learning is thus putting in place a strategic approach to engaging employers in both the private sector and social economy sector to secure the necessary work placements, training placements and, potentially, job opportunities and apprenticeships.
- 6.25** The Department for Employment and Learning will target 60 major indigenous employers initially and seek to recruit high-profile champions from key sectors to help secure commitment to this initiative. The approach will be to ensure that a range of businesses and sectors are seen as equal partners with Government in securing workforce development and economic growth.
- 6.26** Employer representative bodies in the private and voluntary sectors have expressed support for this approach. The public sector also must play a role; a variety of work placements will also be sought in key parts of the public sector such as health, education and local government.

7. SUPPORTING MEASURES

7.1 In addition to the preventative measures outlined at section 4 and the specific engagement measures for those aged 16 to 18 and 18 to 24, outlined in sections 5 and 6, there are a number of infrastructural measures which will be taken across the Executive and broader public service to support participation by all in learning and employment. These include:

- more comprehensive childcare provision;
- measures to improve accessibility of provision, information and support;
- opportunities for creative and sporting engagement;
- reintegration of those who have been in contact with the criminal justice system; and
- creation of employment opportunities through social clauses in public sector procurement.

Childcare

7.2 The Programme for Government 2011-15 sets out the Executive's commitment to 'implement a strategy for integrated and affordable childcare.' Funding totalling £12m over a four year period has been allocated in the 2010 Budget to support the development of the Childcare Strategy.

7.3 The main aim of the Childcare Strategy is to promote integrated, accessible and affordable childcare provision that:

- supports parental participation in the workforce, thereby making a significant impact on the economy, families and communities;
- supports learning and development activity which will improve opportunities for employment; and
- enables children and young people from the most deprived backgrounds to develop skills and aspirations so that they are well-equipped to avail of a full range of life opportunities.

Benefits for parents

7.4 Ensuring the availability of accessible, affordable and high-quality childcare provision will provide more opportunities for parents to work and train. This will, therefore, enhance their employment and personal development prospects. For younger parents, in particular, it is important that accessible, affordable, high quality childcare provision is available to encourage them to continue their education and training, or to enter the world of work.

Benefits for children and young people

7.5 It is widely acknowledged that the physical, emotional and social development of children can be enhanced through the provision of a quality, stimulating childcare environment. The benefits of making an investment in early years provision, particularly in the cases of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, include improved health and employability prospects and reduced anti-social behaviour and offending in later years. Therefore investment in children at a young age can result in positive outcomes in later life, both for the individual and for society as a whole.

7.6 It is anticipated that the Childcare Strategy will be published by the end of 2012.

Accessibility Issues

7.7 Young people living in rural areas can face additional barriers to participation, for example, in relation to the availability of transport and also broadband reception. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) is working with other Departments to ensure that the specific needs of young rural dwellers are understood fully and addressed.

7.8 They will do this by providing advice and support to Departments and Agencies on rural issues, including the specific rural aspects of 'Pathways to Success', providing opportunities for rural young people to avail of DARD funding programmes such as the Rural Development Programme and funding available under the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation framework and, again while working with other Departments, lead the implementation of the Executive's Rural White Paper Action Plan.

7.9 The Rural White Paper Action Plan contained actions for the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) to continue to support innovative ways of improving broadband quality in rural areas. This has been achieved through the operation of the Broadband Fund and the completion, in May 2011, of the rollout of the Next Generation Broadband Project which extended access to high speed broadband services to 85% of rural and urban businesses.

7.10 In terms of transport, the Department for Regional Development will continue to provide transport opportunities and Translink will continue to offer a range of discounts to facilitate access to employment, education and training. Assistance with the costs of transport to training and education opportunities is also generally provided as part of the terms of the programmes.

7.11 Access for young people across Northern Ireland is also supported by the provision of a comprehensive, locally available public library service, free at the point of use. This facilitates a range of activities which support young people and their parents in re-engaging with opportunities for learning and work, including:

- free local access to computers, internet and on line resources;
- a programme of targeted work to support learners and job seekers; and
- support for young parents, including partnerships with Sure Start.

7.12 The Department for Social Development will contribute to promoting access in a range of ways, notably:

- by continuing investment in the most disadvantaged areas through the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy;
- by introducing a new Urban Regeneration and Community Development Policy Framework which will place an emphasis on increasing opportunities and tangible outcomes for marginalised individuals, groups and communities.
- by encouraging young people and those working to support them to volunteer through the Volunteering Strategy; and
- through the Benefit Uptake Entitlement Programme Pilot being delivered through Advice NI.

7.13 It is widely believed that there is a hidden population of young homeless people in Northern Ireland who are not known to the Health Trusts and who do not apply to the Housing Executive because they feel they are unlikely to be awarded Priority Need status under the existing legislation. In late 2009, the Housing Executive and Health and Social Care Trusts developed a “Regional Good Practice Guide” to attempt to meet the accommodation and support needs of 16-21 year olds. The guide sets out the roles and responsibilities of both organisations in meeting their statutory responsibilities and sets out the referral mechanisms for ensuring that such young people are dealt with appropriately. A joint working group involving both agencies and the Council for the Homeless (NI) has met since then to develop housing and support options.

Opportunities for Creative and Sporting Engagement

7.14 Provision for culture, arts and leisure has a significant contribution to make to improving skills and inspiring young people who may not be engaged with traditional educational routes.

7.15 Initiatives such as Creative Learning Centres and After School Film Clubs provide digital skills to teachers and young people, and have been demonstrated by research as improving the literacy of the most disadvantaged children.

7.16 Many programmes aimed at preventing young people from becoming disengaged and re-engaging those who are introduce them to skills from DJing to accredited skills in creative writing, drama, film and others, and thus increase their confidence, raise their self esteem and contribute to their life skills. Similar programmes based on sport help young people develop healthy lifestyles, team-working and leadership skills and generally channel their energy positively.

Young People with experience of the Criminal Justice System

7.17 Another group of young people who find themselves in the NEET category are those who come into contact with the Criminal Justice System. Evidence shows that the risk of individuals becoming involved in criminal or anti-social behaviour can be increased by factors such as childhood or family background, experience of economic and social deprivation and addiction issues.

7.18 Through the Department of Justice developing and implementing the Strategic Framework for Reducing Offending, while working in partnership with key players across the statutory and voluntary sectors, the Executive will seek to maximise opportunities and direct support for specific programmes that build employability skills aimed at reducing the risk of further offending.

7.19 The Community Safety Strategy will support the development and delivery of a network of early intervention programmes across government; deliver specific programmes to reduce the risk of offending across the 8-18 age range; and support the delivery of early intervention projects at community level through local partnerships, which will help to minimise the risk of individuals becoming involved in such criminal and anti-social behaviour. Furthermore, the newly established Policing and Community Safety Partnerships will also have a role in supporting programmes on the ground that seek to achieve more integrated and preventative work for those in the NEET category across Northern Ireland.

7.20 In recognition of the need for a more collective approach to tackling problems in the most deprived areas, the Department of Justice will continue to work closely with other Departments and agencies including, in particular the Department for Social Development and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), to drive forward the Collaborative Working in Disadvantaged Areas agenda in those areas in greatest need.

7.21 In broad terms, the Department of Justice will ensure:

- the development and delivery of education, skills training and work experience for offenders in custody;
- the implementation of the Prison Review in relation to resettlement;
- the implementation of agreed recommendations in the Youth Justice Review relating to reintegration and rehabilitation; and
- that support for young offenders to access appropriate programmes and services in local areas for example, the Local Employment Intermediary Service will be provided through a range of criminal justice organisations.

Social Clauses in Public Sector Procurement

7.22 The Executive recognises that the way it spends public money has major potential to support employment, and that there is significant scope to use its procurement programme, especially its capital programme, to achieve social objectives. To put this into practice, the Executive is increasingly introducing social clauses into contracts, requiring contractors to recruit people facing barriers to employment such as the long term unemployed and young people with experience of care. The Executive is also encouraging people who are economically inactive back into the workplace through employment as apprentices and work placement opportunities in public sector contracts.

8. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1** It is expected that the proposed strategic focus will have a positive impact on our young people as the incidence of youth unemployment is higher than in the overall working age population.
- 8.2** Evidence is derived from sources of unemployment data. The proposed strategy will help to address the imbalance and which should lead to better outcomes for this group.
- 8.3** This focus is not at the expense of other age groups as no reduction in existing provision is proposed. The proposed strategy therefore should not have a detrimental impact on any other age groups.
- 8.4** With better information becoming available through the information gathering strand of work then the equality impact of 'Pathways to Success' can continue to be re-assessed.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS

ESF	European Social Fund
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
LFS	Labour Force Survey
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
PA	Partnerships Agreement
PfG	Programme for Government
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TfS	Training for Success

ANNEX A

ACTION PLAN

This plan draws together all of the main actions that are highlighted throughout the strategy and that will deliver the overall aim of Pathways to Success. The action plan takes these a stage further and complements and facilitates the comprehensive cross-departmental delivery framework (outlined in action one overleaf). The action plan will help form the basis of the planned interim review, proposed for 2014, and mentioned at action point four.

PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS - EXECUTIVE ACTION PLAN

OVERARCHING AIM

This action plan contains the key actions that will ensure that by 2020 every young person will not only have an opportunity to access education, training or other preparation for employment but, to the extent that they are able, will have availed of that opportunity.

ACTION POINT	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME	SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE	LEAD ORGANISATION and SRO
	IMPROVING LEADERSHIP AND CO-ORDINATION		
1. Political and Administrative Leadership.	A NEET Advisory Group, led by the Department for Employment and Learning will be established, reporting to the Delivering Social Change mechanism, comprising officials from the main departments involved, representatives from the voluntary/community, education and health and social care sectors, local government and the business sector. Specific arrangements will be established to provide for the engagement of the voluntary and community sector and to formally recognise the role of the NEET Strategy Forum as part of this.	Established 2012	Department for Employment and Learning

ACTION POINT	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME	SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE	LEAD ORGANISATION and SRO
2. Enhanced role of the NEET Strategy Forum.	Better co-operation and integration of voluntary and community sector activity, a source of best practice advice on community initiatives, better engagement and involvement of young people in developments and initiatives and in conjunction with the Department for Employment and Learning consider the application of the empowerment principles developed by the ESF Learning Network to assist with overcoming the barriers found by ESF participants who are in the NEET category.	Established 2012	NEET Advisory Group
3. Strategic oversight, co-ordination and management.	Appropriate arrangements are put in place to secure delivery of individual actions (including the appointment of Senior Responsible Officers for each action) and monitor implementation.	Established 2012	Department for Employment and Learning.

ACTION POINT	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME	SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE	LEAD ORGANISATION and SRO
4. Assurance of effectiveness.	An interim review of the effectiveness of the structures, systems and specific preventative measures and re-engagement interventions is carried out.	Completed by 2014	Department for Employment and Learning
5. 'On the ground' planning and delivery.	Integrated planning and commissioning to improve the outcomes for children and young people, as set out in the Executive's ten year strategy 'Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge', will be delivered via the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. This work will be taken forward in the context of the cross-Departmental Delivering Social Change framework.	The CYPSP's geographically based Outcomes Groups have consulted on their individual action plans. That consultation ended in April 2012 and the consultation responses are currently being analysed.	Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety.
6. Collaboration, Signposting and Sharing Good Practice.	The NEET Strategy Forum, linked to the NEET Advisory Group will provide the basis for: better co-operation and integration of voluntary and community sector NEET activity, sourcing best practice advice on community initiatives, (needs assessment, mentoring and family support) and provide for better engagement of young people in developments and initiatives.	2012 work begun	NEET Advisory Group

ACTION POINT	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME	SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE	LEAD ORGANISATION and SRO
7. Engagement of Business and Local Government.	Improved access of young people with barriers to the labour market by working in conjunction with Business in the Community and Local Government representation on the NEET Advisory Group.	2012 work begun	NEET Advisory Group
8. Improved information across Departments.	A NI tracking system for those young people who are or who might enter the NEET category allowing a young person's progress and interactions with various government departments and agencies to be apparent and all stakeholders to learn more about their particular client group.	2012 work begun, system in place by 2014	NEET Advisory Group
9. Early Identification of young people at risk of falling into NEET category.	Use of information from schools (electronic transfer in place by December 2012) as part of an early intervention strategy to identify young people early in their lives who are at risk of becoming NEET. The Department for Employment and Learning encouraging the use of the Learning Records Service's Unique Learning Number across the education and training sectors in Northern Ireland.	2013	Department for Employment and Learning.

ACTION POINT	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME	SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE	LEAD ORGANISATION and SRO
10. Strengthened role for Careers Service.	The Careers Service, using information available from schools, FE Colleges, Training for Success and other training programmes will case manage those young people aged 16 and 17 who drop out of provision or do not have a positive destination when they leave, thus supporting and signposting young people to provision that meets their needs.	Begun 2012	Department for Employment and Learning.
11. Increase access to impartial career guidance.	The Department for Employment and Learning will work with the Department of Education to examine how access to impartial careers guidance can be increased, particularly at year 12 and develop partnerships with other relevant organisations.	Begun 2012	Department for Employment and Learning.

ACTION POINT	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME	SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE	LEAD ORGANISATION and SRO
	PREVENTATIVE MEASURES		
12. Early Years Strategy implemented.	To extend coverage of Sure Start Programmes targeted to the 25% most disadvantaged ward areas, over time. All parents with children age 0-4 can access services within the targeted areas.	Underway in 2012	Department of Education.
13. Pre-school education available.	New PfG commitment is to 'ensure that at least one year of pre-school education is available to every family that wants it'.	Commenced implementation of Review of Pre-School Admissions Arrangements, from 2012 – 2015	Department of Education.
14. A community family support programme introduced.	Support for family issues – including, for example, parenting, role models, support for needs children may have, working with schools; social and economic issues – Essential Skills literacy, numeracy and ICT programmes, debt management, money management; health and housing issues - alcohol or drug abuse, working with health agencies, and issues around accommodation.	Programme in place by 2013	Department for Employment and Learning.
15. Improved Educational Attainment including outcomes for literacy and numeracy and for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.	66% of school leavers achieving 5 GCSEs A*- C (or equivalent) including GCSEs in English and Maths (baseline 2008/09 58%). 49% of school leavers entitled to Free School Meals achieving 5 GCSEs A*- C (or equivalent) including GCSEs in English and Maths (baseline 2008/09 30%).	Achieved by 2015	Department of Education.

ACTION POINT	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME	SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE	LEAD ORGANISATION and SRO
16. Enhanced curriculum implemented.	<p>A joint document describing how 14 to 19 year olds will benefit (and that will make the best use of the resources available) will be agreed providing pupils with a broad and balanced education, developing skills and dispositions they need to access learning and to function effectively in the workplace and all aspects of life including in literacy, numeracy and ICT.</p> <p>Educational standards, and the level of qualifications achieved, are improved for all learners in the 14 to 19 age group and that learner progression is built into all curricular provision. Collaborative arrangements between schools and FE Colleges continue and schools avail of high quality courses on offer by FE Colleges. The Entitlement Framework, offering one third of the curriculum available to be general; one third be applied and the remaining third at the discretion of the school. Underpinning the choices open to young people from Key Stage 4 is access to high quality careers education, information, advice and guidance.</p>	Commenced and further staged implementation from 2012 onwards.	Department of Education/ Department for Employment and Learning.

ACTION POINT	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME	SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE	LEAD ORGANISATION and SRO
17. School attendances improved.	New and innovative approaches to promote regular and sustained attendance at school will be developed.	Guidance to schools to be issued 2013	Department of Education.
18. Special educational needs reviewed.	A new strategy for special educational needs and inclusion, supported by a programme to ensure teachers have the skills to support most pupils with learning difficulties and other special needs combined with external supports where necessary from the Education and Library Boards.	Agreement to the SEN and Inclusion Review Policy Memorandum.	Department of Education.
19. Examination of Education otherwise than at school.	Arrangements for education otherwise than at school are equitable across all Board areas and accountability for pupils' outcomes are ascribed.	2014	Department of Education.
20. Pupil's Emotional health and wellbeing programme developed.	All schools proactively promote pupils' wellbeing as part of their raising standards agenda.	2014	Department of Education.

ACTION POINT	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME	SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE	LEAD ORGANISATION and SRO
21. Improved employment, education or training for young people in care.	Increase in the number of care leavers aged 19 in education, training or employment	75% of Care Leavers Aged 19 in education, training or employment by March 2013	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.
22. Better planning for Looked After Children.	Sixteen Plus services within HSC Trusts for young people pre-sixteen working jointly with schools, Looked After Children education services, carers and the Careers Service.	Ongoing	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.
23. Development and delivery of initiatives under "Preparation for Adulthood"	Dedicated Preparation and Lifeskills Workers (PALs) in place to support carers and looked-after young people aged 13-15 to prepare better for adult life through: the delivery of theme based group work programmes to young people in partnership with statutory, voluntary and community partners; and capacity building among carers.	Established initiatives ongoing. Plans currently being developed in respect of theme based work programmes by March 2013 e.g. finance initiatives, independent living skills, cookery skills etc	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

ACTION POINT	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME	SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE	LEAD ORGANISATION and SRO
24 Updated Suicide Prevention Strategy.	The Northern Ireland Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan “Protect Life” updated.	2012	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.
25. Improved communication skills for those who need them.	The Speech Language and Communication Therapy Action Plan: Improving Services for Young People (2011/12 – 2012/13) will develop a speech, language and communication care pathway for children and young people who are not in education, training or employment and for young offenders.	Commenced and further staged implementation from 2012 onwards.	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.
26. Assistance to overcoming barriers.	The Work Connect programme aims to assist people to overcome any health and/or disability related barriers to employment by helping them to prepare for, find and sustain meaningful part-time and full-time employment.	Planned launch July 2012	Department for Employment and Learning.

ACTION POINT	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME	SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE	LEAD ORGANISATION and SRO
	RE-ENGAGING – 16-18 YEAR OLDS		
27. Guaranteed training place.	A guaranteed training place for every 16-19 year old that is not in education, employment or other training/apprenticeship scheme. The Training for Success programme – unique to Northern Ireland - offers individuals a weekly allowance, non-means tested, of £40 per week. Among other strands, the scheme includes a strand “Skills for Your Life” which is targeted at those young people who need support and assistance to enable them to progress to qualification focused training and where Essential Skills qualifications are embedded across provision.	Already in place	Department for Employment and Learning.
28. Community based access programme introduced.	Re-engagement and mentoring of young people using community and voluntary sector organisations who are more readily able to engage with people who are distant from learning and the labour market.	In place by 2013	Department for Employment and Learning.
29. Development of individual action plans promoted.	Personalised plans which identify individual starting points and needs and plot a pathway through education or training to employment - introduced with the community based access programme and shared further thereafter.	In place by 2013	Department for Employment and Learning.

ACTION POINT	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME	SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE	LEAD ORGANISATION and SRO
30. Mapping of services.	An audit of all provision undertaken allowing identification of progression routes to meet the needs of each young person. And this will also facilitate a continuum of provision to be identified to enable young people to avail of services in a timely manner, particularly for those at risk of disengagement.	In place by 2013	Department for Employment and Learning.
31. A training allowance for young people participating on existing ESF programmes introduced.	Offer of financial assistance to help with the costs of living and provide an incentive for participation.	In place by 2013	Department for Employment and Learning.
32. Development of a collaboration and innovation fund.	Piloting and testing of new and co-operative approaches, based on sound evidence, to re-engage those young people who are in the NEET category.	In place by 2013	Department for Employment and Learning.
33. New Youth Policy Strategy.	A new policy for the Youth Service will clearly align the policy and support for youth work in education with wider education priorities with a focus on targeted provision to help meet the needs of specific groups of young people who may be at greater risk of social exclusion, may be marginalised or isolated or at risk of achieving poor educational outcomes.	Public consultation 2012. Staged implementation from 2013 onwards	Department of Education.

ACTION POINT	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME	SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE	LEAD ORGANISATION and SRO
34. New Youth Enterprise Initiatives.	Development of a set of youth enterprise initiatives across the FE, HE, schools, specific sector with a focus on the NEET group. Increased enterprise skills across all market segments with opportunities identified for business starts.	Development has commenced	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment / Invest NI
35. Reduction in Offending via appropriate employability related programmes.	Increased education and employment skills and employability of offenders and provision of pathways into employment and training.	Strategy subject to consultation during 2012	Department of Justice.
36. Development and delivery of education, skills training and work experience for youth and adult offenders, including those in custody.	Reduction in re-offending through access to youth employability schemes and improved resettlement process on release from custody.	Review of Northern Ireland Prison Service learning and skills service completed by autumn 2012	Department of Justice

ACTION POINT	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME	SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE	LEAD ORGANISATION and SRO
37. Implementation of agreed recommendations in Youth Justice Review relating to reintegration and rehabilitation.	Diversion from criminal justice system and removal of barriers to education, training and employment.	To be reflected in agreed Youth Justice Review implementation plan	Department of Justice
38. Support for young offenders to access appropriate programmes & services in local areas.	Youth Justice Agency provision of pathways to education, training and employment and reduction in re-offending.	As reflected in Youth Justice Agency business plan	Department of Justice
39. PSNI in partnership with the Princes Trust Team Leader programme will work to facilitate further education and employment opportunities for young people.	Reduce the opportunity to commit crime and risk taking behaviour. To develop an understanding of citizenship, and to provide a pathway into employment or further education.	3 year programme	Department of Justice

ACTION POINT	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME	SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE	LEAD ORGANISATION and SRO
	RE-ENGAGING – 18-24 YEAR OLDS		
40. Enhanced diagnosis of need.	(Building on the work the Employment Service does already), provide an initial detailed diagnosis of need, including the development of basic “employability” skills such as CV building, application writing, interviewing skills etc. This diagnosis will include identification of young people with NEET characteristics, with a view to referral to immediate support.	In place by 2013	Department for Employment and Learning.
41. Gaining experience of work.	Early opportunities for the job ready to experience the world of work will be offered through volunteering opportunities in charitable organisations and through a new 2 to 8 week Work Experience Programme brokered by the Employment Service.	In place by 2013	Department for Employment and Learning.
42. Skills Needs Assessment enhanced.	Offer of further careers advice from a qualified Careers Adviser to identify possible further training opportunities. This will take the form of an individual one-to-one interview and personal assessment to determine current skills and competences.	In place by 2013	Department for Employment and Learning (Careers Service)

ACTION POINT	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME	SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE	LEAD ORGANISATION and SRO
43. Work Sector based Skills Development.	A new Youth Strand of the Steps to Work programme will offer additional sector-specific work experience, flexibly blended with skills training. Fundamental to this approach will be opportunities for young people to achieve additional, and build on any existing, relevant qualifications in the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).	In place by 2013	Department for Employment and Learning.
44. Employment opportunities enhanced.	Employers offering full time jobs to young people in the priority skills areas will be able to avail of an enhanced employer subsidy provided they allow the young people to continue with their skills development to gain a qualification while in employment	In place by 2013	Department for Employment and Learning.
45. Work placements.	Work placements sought in key parts of the public sector such as health, education and local government.	In place by 2013	Department for Employment and Learning.

ACTION POINT	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME	SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE	LEAD ORGANISATION and SRO
	SUPPORTING MEASURES		
46. Childcare provision supported.	Support for better co-ordination across government departments as they design and implement services that will improve the lives of children and their families. £12m additional funding is available over the Comprehensive Spending Review period to help the Childcare Strategy achieve its vision.	Strategy published 2012	Office of First Minister and deputy First Minister
47. Rural Poverty and Social Isolation tackled.	Opportunities provided for rural young people to avail of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development funding programmes such as the Rural Development Programme and funding available under the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation framework. Executive's Rural White Paper Action Plan implemented.	Already in place	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.
48. Extended access to Broadband.	Innovative ways of improving broadband quality in rural areas supported through the operation of the Broadband Fund and the rollout of the Next Generation Broadband Project, to extend access to high speed broadband services to 85% of rural and urban businesses.	Already in place	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

ACTION POINT	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME	SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE	LEAD ORGANISATION and SRO
49. Incentive grant to start a business	As part of the Jobs Fund, Invest NI provide a £1,500 business incentive grant targeted at those in NEET category who complete a business plan signed off by Invest NI, and start a business. In delivering on the NEET measure Invest NI has developed an information sharing agreement with the Department for Employment and Learning in respect of their Steps to Work Programme in order to maximise the referrals for Jobs Fund support. This support is expected to deliver 280 business starts from a budget of £450k.	March 2014	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment / Invest NI
50. Provision of Rural Transport Services.	People in rural areas enabled to access transport and potential work opportunities by continuing to assist travel costs for school, further education and training provision.	Already in place	Department for Regional Development.
51. Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy -People and Place.	Support programmes on the ground that seek to address to develop more integrated and preventative work for NEET within the Neighbourhood Renewal Areas.	Already in place	Department for Social Development (Urban Regeneration and Community Development Group).

ACTION POINT	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME	SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE	LEAD ORGANISATION and SRO
52. Urban Regeneration and Community Development Framework	A new Urban Regeneration and Community Development Policy Framework will be introduced which will place an emphasis on increasing opportunities and tangible outcomes for marginalised individuals, groups and communities.	Public consultation planned for 2012	Department for Social Development
53. Increase the use of Volunteering.	Examination of opportunities under the Volunteering strategy for thematic groupings such as those young people who are NEET.	Strategy launched 2012	Department for Social Development.
54. Improved information on benefit entitlement.	Delivery of the Benefit Uptake Entitlement Programme.	Pilot launched in January 2012 and will be evaluated in early 2013	Department for Social Development.
55. Delivery of European Social Fund Programmes.	A range of supported projects totalling some £10m directed at those young people in the NEET category.	Already in place	Department for Employment and Learning (European Division).
56. Implementation of Social Clauses in Public Sector Procurement.	Programme for Government commitment to include social clauses in public procurement contracts for supplies, services and construction works.	Already in place	All Departments (including Department for Regional Development Roads Service, Northern Ireland Water and Translink).

ANNEX B

The Department for Employment and Learning Assembly Committee Recommendations Response

No.	Key Conclusions and Recommendations	Action
	Strategic Issues	
1	The Committee has recognised that the NEET strategy must be cross-departmental; however, Members recommend that there is an individual(s)/ body that provides oversight of the development and implementation of the strategy and also has a role in considering how best to maximise cross-departmental funding for the strategy. The Committee recommends that the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister Junior Ministers should fulfil this role as Children and Young People fall under their remit (Para.122).	The Department for Employment and Learning has led the development of Pathways to Success through the Executive. The strategy fully endorses the cross departmental approach and contains a range of existing and new funded Departmental actions from all the relevant major service delivery Departments. Pathways to Success further proposes that implementation will be managed and delivered through the Delivering Social Change structure led by Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister Ministers.
2	The Committee recommends that the NEET strategy for Northern Ireland is based on structures that firmly cement partnership, co-operation and co-ordination between the Executive Departments and other agencies and bodies, stakeholder groups, including the schools, colleges and universities, and business. Such a multi-agency approach must become the accepted way to work (Para.216).	Partnership, co-operation and co-ordination will be achieved through Pathways to Success's strategic focus of harnessing collective action through the Delivering Social Change and Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership structures. There will also be a Steering Group with relevant statutory and non state organisations, including local Government, business and the community and voluntary sector.
3	The Committee recommends that the NEET strategy for Northern Ireland must ensure cognisance of issues such as economic and social context, which are beyond the NEET young person themselves so that provision for this group is more holistic (Para.73).	The economic and social context for the strategy is set out in section 2.

4	The Committee recommends that the community and voluntary sector be embedded in the NEET strategy (Para.120).	The crucial role of the voluntary and community sector has been recognised in Pathways to Success, particularly in respect of reaching disengaged young people. The sector will be represented on the steering group, and the strategy envisages an important ongoing role for the Forum. (Section 3).
5	The Committee recommends that those developing the NEET strategy ensure that the pivotal role of mentors/Key Workers/Support Workers is deeply embedded within the systems of the strategy (Para.121).	Mentoring has been recognised as one of the key components of Pathways to Success. It is critical to provide continued support to young people and will be a key aspect of the new programmes set out in sections 4 and 5.
6	The Committee recommends that those developing the NEET strategy should look at ways of seeking accreditation for provision in the strategy as part of a Best Practice Code. This would help in the development of a framework of provision and would facilitate greater monitoring of the outcomes of provision (Para.159).	Pathways to Success has encouraged and supported the NEET Strategy Forum who have convened a best practice working group that will link with statutory organisations in taking forward sharing and improved outcomes for current and future initiatives. Through this process best practice will be identified and standards approval/accreditation pursued.(Section 3)
7	The Committee recommends that those developing the NEET strategy look to international provision and see what might appropriately be applied here (Para.191).	The Department for Employment and Learning has and continues to look to international provision to find what may be applicable here. We monitor the Youth Opportunities Initiative which builds upon the EU 2020 flagship initiatives ‘Youth on the Move’ and ‘New Skills for New Jobs’, as well as other provisions. The recently appointed Brussels desk officer has been tasked to monitor initiatives in other EU states. Additionally the Department will consider the report from the international Children in Conflict Conference held in Belfast in March 2012. (Section 1)

8	The Committee recommends that those developing the NEET strategy should ensure that it has a clear set of aims and a clear statement of the drivers/ levers that will ensure those aims are achieved (Para.227).	These are set out in section 1 and 3 and in the action plan.
9	The Committee recommends that the strategy should contain robust systems for measuring, monitoring and assessing the achievement of its aims (Para.228).	Implementation of Pathways to Success will be measured through the reporting and monitoring of achievements based on the integral action plan. Pathways to Success also describes how more robust targets will be developed through improved information systems and the development of tracking described in section 3.
10	The Committee recommends that targets set by the strategy are cognisant of those embedded in other strategies and that they are agreed by the stakeholders (Para.123).	Pathways to Success highlights the other key supporting strategies and provides links to these in Annex C. It also sets out how the strategy will be delivered as part of the Executive's Delivering Social Change Programme (described in section 3). Targets for the strategy are set out in Annex A.
11	The Committee recommends that those developing the NEET strategy ensure that the provisions offered by individual Executive Departments (and their agencies and bodies) in respect of NEET young people should be referenced in the strategy; particularly where there is a need to align with other strategies. The Committee is especially concerned that there should be reference to the 'Protect Life and Suicide Prevention' strategy, the 'Children and Young People' strategy and the 'Care Matters' strategy for young people leaving care (Para.407).	Pathways to Success cross-references the other strategies specified in the text and at Annex C.

	Tracking and Monitoring / Careers Guidance and Advice / Pastoral Care	
12	<p>The Committee recommends that work is undertaken to better track and monitor the numbers of disabled young people who find themselves NEET. This should allow for better provision for disabled NEET young people to be incorporated into the NEET strategy (Para.78).</p>	<p>The Department for Employment and Learning is in the lead in encouraging the use of the Learning Records Service’s Unique Learning Number across the education and training sectors in Northern Ireland. This has a potentially useful role to play in helping to identify those who are Not in Education, Employment or Training. In addition to the existing work of the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership, the Department for Employment and Learning provides a dedicated Disability Employment Service Programme. Development of a tracking system will encompass young people with disabilities and inform the development of services. Proposals for developing a tracking mechanism are outlined in section 3.</p>

13	<p>The Committee would particularly endorse the Departmental scoping study recommendation which proposes a follow-up survey to supplement the school leavers survey, and the re-introduction of the Youth Cohort Study in N.I. (Para.33).</p>	<p>The Department for Employment and Learning has considered the possibility of undertaking a Youth Cohort Study (YCS) in Northern Ireland. However, the lack of a suitable sampling frame from which to draw a sample of participants has meant that it has not been possible to undertake the study to date. Resourcing of a Youth Cohort Study is a further consideration. The indicative cost for one full round of the YCS ie participants being first interviewed at age 16 and interviewed on three further occasions until age 24, was in the region of £1.5m or approximately £375k per round of interviews. In order for the YCS to be of benefit several cohorts and associated rounds of interviews would need to be undertaken, extending over a minimum period of 15-20 years. The quantitative information which would be provided by such a survey should be available through the tracking system being developed.</p>
14	<p>The Committee recommends that, as part of the NEET strategy, the Careers Service should have access to all post primary pupils in Northern Ireland, including those in alternative provision and those in the colleges. Access should not be decided by the schools as this reinforces an inconsistent and unequal approach to the provision of careers advice and guidance (Para.142).</p>	<p>Strengthened arrangements for Careers Service engagement with schools and increased access are outlined at section 3. The Careers Service will also actively case-manage and follow up all 16 and 17 year olds previously interviewed in school, to support them in making the transition into sustained employment, training or education, until they are 18 years old.</p>
15	<p>The Committee recommends that work is done by the Careers Service and the Department of Education to overcome data-sharing issues (Para.134).</p>	<p>Section 3 sets out arrangements for taking this forward.</p>

16	The Committee recommends that those developing the NEET strategy look at the possibilities around the Careers Service acting as the repository for information regarding the interventions that young people have received, much as Careers Wales does in Wales (Para.199).	Section 3 considers this proposal. This issue will be taken forward as part of the development of the tracking system for young people.
17	The Committee recommends that the Careers Service should continue to build partnerships that give it access to an increasing number of young people and these should include greater involvement in colleges and stronger relationships with business, including greater use of exchange programmes (Para.136).	The Department for Employment and Learning supports the recommendation to continue to build relationships that give access to an increasing number of young people and will continue to develop partnerships with relevant organisations.
18	The Committee recommends that the work of the Careers Service should be subject to independent evaluation (Para.137).	The Careers Service has committed to seek Matrix accreditation by March 2013. It is independently assessed and is the nationally (UK) recognised quality standard for organisations, to assess and measure their advice and support services, which ultimately supports individuals in their choice of career. Following initial assessment, plans are currently under development to progress towards recognition by 2013.
19	The Committee recommends that those developing the NEET strategy ensure that the universities and colleges are involved in that development and are party to arrangements regarding pastoral care and careers advice and guidance (Para.205).	Strengthened arrangements for Careers Service engagement with schools, FE colleges and training providers are outlined in section 3 and pastoral care in FE and HE in section 4.

20	The Committee recommends that a key part of the NEET strategy is the development of more robust pastoral care systems in schools, colleges, universities and for intervention programmes. These systems should be well signposted and a clear part of a referrals framework (Para.119).	Development of a Pupils' Emotional Health and Well-being programme in schools outlined in section 4. Strengthened arrangements for Careers Service engagement with schools, FE colleges and training providers are outlined at section 3. The new programmes proposed in section 5 and 6 include high levels of individual support and mentoring for young people.
	Interventions / Provisions for Young People who are NEET	
21	The Committee believes that a service mapping exercise needs to be undertaken as part of the development of an overarching NEET strategy in Northern Ireland and recommends that those developing the strategy undertake this (Para.359).	The need for further coherence is widely recognised (particularly in the voluntary and community sector where there is a myriad of provision), and this is acknowledged in Pathways to Success. The NEET Forum has identified this as an area for future work and measures in Pathways to Success will facilitate work to establish progression routes to statutory provision.
22	The Committee recommends that the Department for Employment and Learning re-examines its programmes as part of the development of the NEET strategy and assesses whether there are gaps in its provision that should be addressed. This should be done with reference to relevant stakeholders (Para.375).	The Department has examined its current provision and has put forward proposals for additional help for both the 16-18 and the 18-24 age groups. Proposals are detailed in section 5 for the 18 to 24 age group and in section 6 for the 18 to 24 age group.
23	The Committee recommends that the NEET strategy for Northern Ireland must take into account that interventions should be community-based where possible and that these should be holistic, involving the young person's family, when possible (Para.63).	Pathways to Success recognises the role of community based action and puts forward at section 4 proposals for a community based access programme and a community family support programme.

24	The Committee recommends that the NEET strategy for Northern Ireland must seek ways to specifically address the high incidence of care-experienced young people who end up NEET and should be cognisant of other, parallel strategies which target this group of young people (Para.67).	Actions to ensure engagement of care-experienced young people are set out comprehensively at section 4.
25	The Committee recommends that those involved in developing the NEET strategy must ensure the creation of mechanisms to signpost interventions/ provision for NEET young people and those involved in helping and supporting (Para.81).	Signposting arrangements are considered at section 5 of the strategy and also form a central part of the proposed new programmes for 16 to 18 and 18 to 24 year olds.
26	The Committee recommends that not only should those developing the NEET strategy ensure that it provides a “continuum of intervention”; they should ensure that interventions are also available during the traditional school/ college holidays during the summer months (Para.118).	Pathways to Success will take forward work, in conjunction with the voluntary and community sector to enhance the ‘continuum of interventions’ mentioned. These are referenced in the strategy particularly in section 5. Colleges will continue to deliver provision in a flexible and accessible manner, which meets local needs, including periods which fall outside of the formal academic semester.
27	The Committee recommends that organisations providing interventions should be expected to report ‘fall out’, i.e. if a young person leaves provision then that information should be circulated to those who need to know. Those developing the NEET strategy should consider how ‘fall out’ should be reported (Para.200).	Agree. This is considered in section 3 of the document, and arrangements are now being put in place to ensure that the Careers Service has this information and implements a case management approach for 16 and 17 year olds who have ‘fallen out’ of provision. The introduction of a tracking system will formalise this.

28	The Committee recommends that those developing the NEET strategy look at the possible application of the Scottish Activity Agreements here (Para.238).	This was considered as part of the Pathways to Success development process and has led to the proposed greater use of individual action plans and the training allowance for young people participating on existing ESF programmes targeted at the NEET category outlined in section 5.
29	The Committee believes that volunteering can and should be a key element of the NEET strategy and recommends that those developing the strategy examine its potential for incorporation (Para.247).	The Department for Social Development's contribution to Pathways to Success includes all their continuing efforts and investment and in particular through its Volunteering Strategy, referenced in section 7 and a link has been provided at Annex C.
30	The Committee recommends that those developing the NEET strategy look at the Welsh E3+ programme and see what elements could be applied here (Para.294).	The revised Curriculum and Entitlement Framework, Extended and Full Service Schools, Business Education and Area Learning Communities, all outlined in section 4, already take forward relevant elements.
31	The Committee recommends that those developing the NEET strategy develop a Best Practice Code for those involved in provision for young people who are NEET; allowing Best Practice to be mainstreamed (Para.158).	Pathways to Success has encouraged and supports the NEET Strategy Forum to convene a best practice working group that will link with statutory organisations. Through this process, best practice will be identified and standards approval/accreditation pursued. (Section 3)

	Funding	
32	The Committee sees funding as a significant issue and recommends that those developing the NEET strategy for Northern Ireland look to the Welsh NEET strategy with regard to its creative approach to using EU funding. The Committee considers that working collectively to access finance will produce better results (Para.261).	The Department for Employment and Learning has fully utilised current ESF funding under the 2007-13 programme, which has specifically targeted projects to address the NEET issue. Proposals for the 2014-20 round of funding are at an early stage of development, but we anticipate provision to address the NEET issue again being supported.
	Education Issues	
33	The Committee recognises that the study of GCSEs and 'A' Levels is not appropriate for all our young people. As a result Members recommend that those developing the NEET strategy examine the reasons behind pupil disengagement in our schools and consider whether a 14+ vocational route for young people in schools should be developed, which is regarded as equal in quality to the academic route (GCSEs/'A' Levels) and which contains agreed levels of English and STEM subjects. This route should connect with a continuation of education/training at college or university (Para.115).	The Department of Education and the Department for Employment and Learning are working together on a 14-19 Statement to ensure the effective delivery of their respective policies and provision for 14-19 year olds. This work is explained in detail in section 4, including the use of applied/vocational provision as part of the Entitlement Framework curriculum offering.

34	<p>The Committee recommends that evolution of the curriculum used in our schools is guided by the need to make our young people’s educational experience meaningful and connected to the world around them and should be attractive in order to minimise disengagement. All teaching should reflect on the contextualisation of the information and courses in our schools, academic or vocational, should have robust PSDE, careers guidance/advice and employability/entrepreneurial skills built in, where appropriate (Para.116).</p>	<p>This will come as an outcome of the effective delivery of the entitlement described in section 4.</p>
35	<p>The Committee supports the ideas behind Area Learning Partnerships (ALPs) and recommends to those developing the NEET strategy that they ensure that these clusters are encouraged and examples of best practice in gaining the optimum benefits from the use of ALPs are widely circulated (Para.117).</p>	<p>There are 29 Area Learning Communities (ALCs) across the 5 Board areas, set up to support the delivery of the Entitlement Framework for pupils in Key Stage 4 and post-16. They provide a forum for curricular planning across schools, sharing ideas and best practice to ensure the needs of the pupils in their schools are met. The Entitlement Framework as outlined at section 4 will guarantee all pupils access to a minimum number of economically relevant courses with clear progression pathways at Key Stage 4 and post-16, of which at least one third must be general and one third applied.</p>
36	<p>The Committee recommends that those developing the NEET strategy look at interventions in young people’s lives at primary and pre primary level and ensure that these are referenced in the strategy (Para.309).</p>	<p>Pathways to Success refers to Early Years provision at section 4. Every School a Good School – a Policy for School Improvement and the Literacy and Numeracy strategy both include a focus on the importance of early intervention in raising standards and details of other DE policies and programmes to support pupils facing barriers to learning are referenced also at section 4.</p>

	Rural Issues	
37	The Committee recommends that those developing the NEET strategy look specifically at the transport issues that face rural young people (Para.89).	These issues are considered in section 7 of the document.
38	The Committee recommends that childcare, broadband access and mobile phone coverage and accessibility of training and employment opportunities facing rural young people should also be fed into the Rural White Paper being prepared by The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (Para.89).	These issues are also considered in section 7.
	STEM	
39	The Committee recommends that the development of the NEET strategy is undertaken with reference to the STEM agenda (Para.268).	Pathways to Success refers to the STEM agenda in section 4.
	Social Procurement	
40	The Committee is extremely supportive of 'social procurement' and, once again, advocates its use by the Executive Departments and its incorporation into the NEET strategy as appropriate (Para.302).	Pathways to Success contains reference to social clauses in procurement contracts in section 7.

	Education Maintenance Allowance	
41	<p>The Committee has heard much about Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) during its evidence-gathering for this Inquiry and Members believe that EMA may need to be targeted more specifically. The Committee recommends that the criteria for receiving EMA should to be focused more on those to whom it provides a particularly significant incentive to re-engage (Para.239).</p>	<p>EMA has been the subject of a review. The Department for Employment and Learning and the Department of Education officials have considered the review findings and have drafted some options for the future of EMA to form the basis of a public consultation. Subsequent to agreement on these options, by the two Ministers and the Executive, the public consultation on the future of EMA is expected to be undertaken later in 2012. It is proposed as part of this strategy to extend the non means tested EMA to trainees on pre-vocational schemes for example those funded by ESF, subject to the schemes allowing for progression to Training for Success or other recognised training or employment.</p>

ANNEX C

Other key Departmental strategies & Links

The 10 Year Strategy for Children and Young People

<http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/ten-year-strategy.pdf>

Child Poverty Strategies

http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/final_child_poverty_strategy_-_agreed_by_executive_-_22_march_2011.pdf

Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion

<http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/antipovertyandsocialinclusion.pdf>

Programme for Government

<http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/pfg-2011-2015-final-report.pdf>

The Northern Ireland Economic Strategy

<http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/ni-economic-strategy-revised-130312.pdf>

Families Matter Strategy

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/families_matter_strategy.pdf

Care Matters Strategy

<http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/care-matters-ni-3.pdf>

Public Health Strategy

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/health_development-final_report_-_september_2010.pdf

The Social Investment Fund

<http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/strategic-paper-on-the-social-investment-fund.pdf>

Every School a Good School

http://www.deni.gov.uk/esags_policy_for_school_improvement_-_final_version_05-05-2009.pdf

Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

http://www.deni.gov.uk/count_read_succeed_literacy__numeracy_strategy.pdf

The Volunteering Strategy

<http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/join-in-get-involved-2012.pdf>

Neighbourhood Renewal

http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/urcdg-urban_regeneration/neighbourhood_renewal/nru_publications/neighbourhood_renewal_-_people_and_place.htm

Cohesion, Sharing and Integration

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/researchandlibrary/2009/7109.pdf>

Rural Development

http://www.dardni.gov.uk/northern_ireland_rural_development_perogramme_version_5_approved_jan_2010_pdf_2105_kb

The Department for Employment and Learning's STEM Strategy

http://www.delni.gov.uk/es/2857p_stem_booklet_v5.pdf

FE Means Business

http://www.delni.gov.uk/fe_means_business_implementation_plan_-_june_06.pdf



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