# Characteristics of young people who are long-term NEET

**February 2018**

**Department for Education**

# Contents

# Introduction

This report includes new analysis of the characteristics of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) for a year three years after completing key stage 4 in the 2010/11 academic year. The vast majority of this cohort were 18 at the start of the 2013/14 academic year. This analysis was produced to help inform NEET policy development. A number of acronyms are used in this report and they are shown in Annex A.

# Methodology

The cohort at the end of key stage 4 in 2010/11 were tracked in a number of administrative datasets for three years to enable analysis of those who were NEET for the whole year in 2013/14. The key stage 4 data was joined to the School Census and the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) to monitor post-16 participation in schools, colleges and other publicly funded providers. Awarding Body data was linked in to collate information on those in further education missing from these datasets (e.g. those in independent schools). The data was also joined to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) dataset to ensure higher education participation was included. Information on benefit claimants and employment spells from the DfE's Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) dataset and local authority monitoring data from the National Client Caseload Information System (NCCIS) were also included to ensure the majority of those not in education or training were also covered.

Using the above sources, a monthly NEET marker was assigned to each person in this cohort. The following hierarchy was used for this process:

- If the person claimed benefits (DWP data in LEO) within the given month then they are classed as 'NEET'
- If the person was employed (HMRC data in LEO) during the given month they are classed as 'not NEET'
  - Note that if they claimed benefits and were employed during same month then they are classed as 'NEET'
- If the person was shown as being in education or training in the School Census, ILR, HESA or NCCIS data then they are classed as 'not NEET'
- If the person was only shown to be participating in the Awarding Body data (and not in another education dataset) and in the local authority tracking data as being NEET for the given month then they are classed as 'NEET'
- If the person was only shown to be participating in the Awarding Body data (and not in another education dataset) and not NEET in the NCCIS data then they are classed as 'not NEET'
- If the NCCIS data assigned the person to NEET then they are classed as 'NEET'

- If the person was not present in the various education datasets, not claiming benefits or employed and had unknown activity in the NCCIS data during the given month then they are classed as 'Unknown'.

Following this process a range of variables from DfE datasets covering attainment, absence, exclusions, pupil characteristics, contact with children's social care and information on institutions attended were joined to the database to enable analysis of young people who were long-term NEET.

# Analysis

**Table 1** shows that just under 80% of this cohort were not NEET in 2013/14 and almost 5% were NEET for the whole year. The remainder were spread fairly evenly between 1 and 11 months NEET during the year.

**Table 1: Months NEET in 2013/14 for those at the end of key stage 4 in 2010/11**

| Months NEET | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 506,500 | 79.5% |
| 1 | 13,700 | 2.1% |
| 2 | 15,000 | 2.3% |
| 3 | 10,500 | 1.7% |
| 4 | 8,800 | 1.4% |
| 5 | 7,900 | 1.2% |
| 6 | 7,600 | 1.2% |
| 7 | 7,300 | 1.1% |
| 8 | 6,900 | 1.1% |
| 9 | 6,800 | 1.1% |
| 10 | 6,700 | 1.1% |
| 11 | 9,100 | 1.4% |
| 12 | 30,400 | 4.8% |
| **Total** | **637,200** | **100.0%** |

As the aim of this analysis was to look at the characteristics of young people who were long-term NEET, the remainder of this analysis focusses on the 4.8% of the cohort who were NEET for the whole year.

**Figure 1** shows the proportion of each group who spent the year NEET in 2013/14. These are not mutually exclusive (excluding the 'Looked after child' and 'Children in

Need (not LAC)' groups), so one individual can be in multiple categories. This shows that 37% of the cohort who were looked after children were NEET for the year in 2013/14. Those who attended a pupil referral unit (PRU) or were in alternative provision at some point, and pupils who had been permanently excluded during secondary school were the other groups where more than a fifth spent the year NEET.

**Figure 1: Proportion NEET for the year in 2013/14 by characteristic**
**(for those above the national average)**
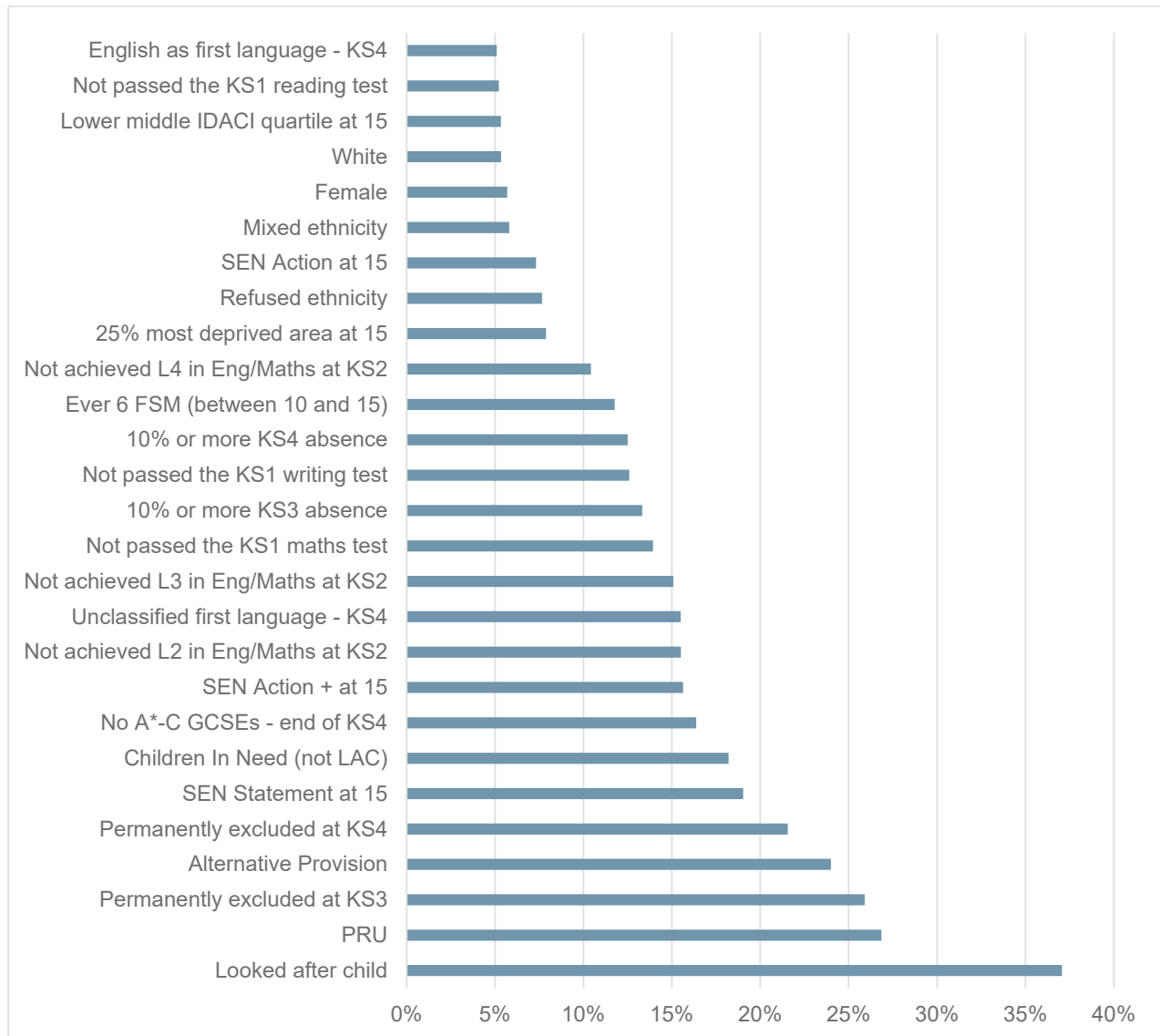


Some of these groups only have a small number of people in them and therefore only account for a small proportion of those NEET for the year. To overcome this, **Figure 2** shows how over-represented each group is when looking at those who were NEET for the year. This shows that those without any A*-C GCSEs at the end of key stage 4 are those most over-represented in the year NEET group as they account for two thirds of those NEET for the year but only 19% of the cohort and so are over-represented by 47 percentage points.

**Figure 2: Percentage point difference between proportion of those NEET for the year in 2013/14 and proportion of total cohort**
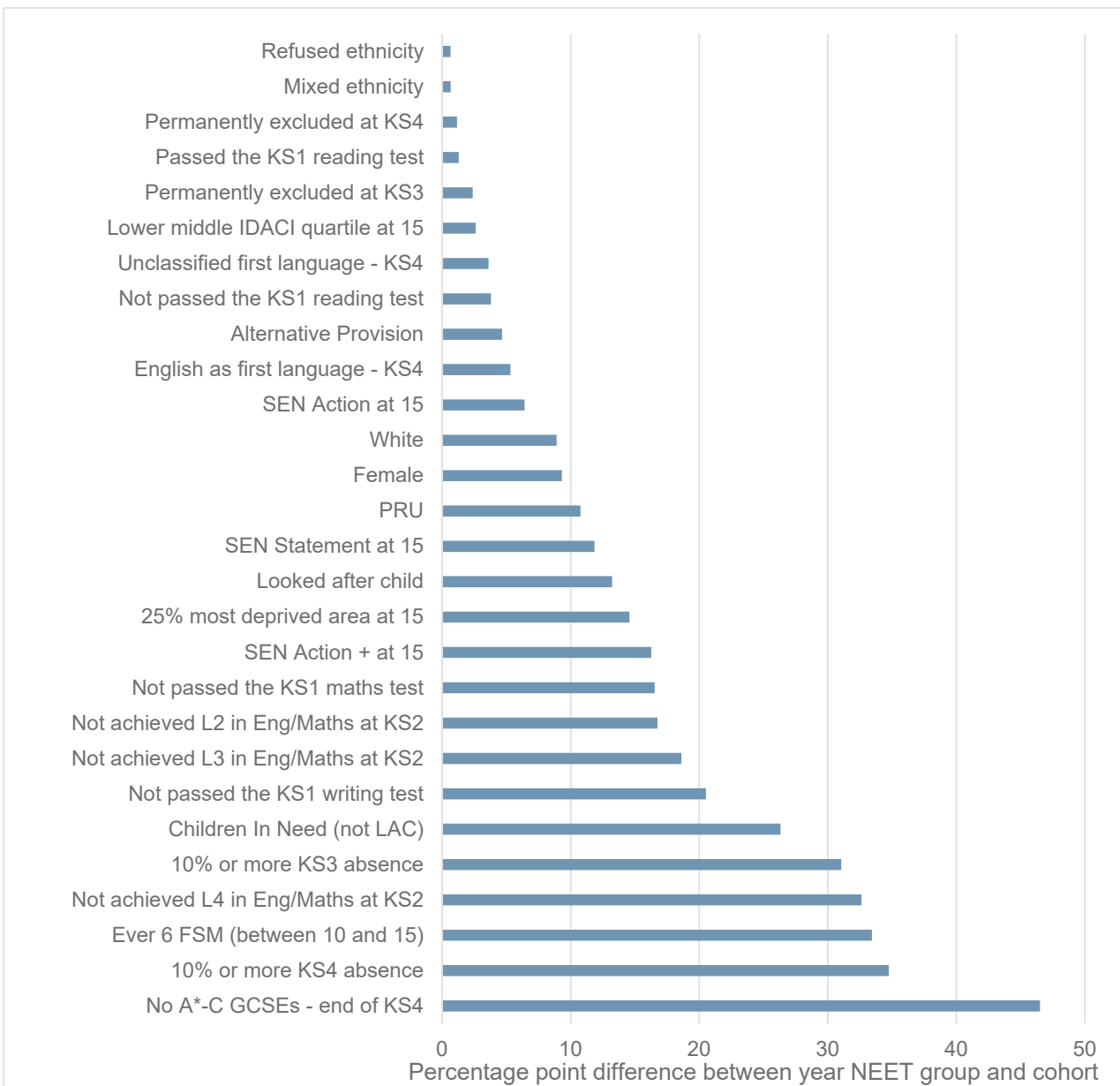


The groups most likely to be NEET for the year in the analysis above were similar to those in research carried out by Social Finance in Newcastle. We mirrored their approach using national data and aggregated the cohort via a hierarchy into the following groups:

- Ever a looked after child (LAC)
- Ever in the Children in Need census but not a looked after child (CIN)
- Attended alternative provision or a pupil referral unit (AP/PRU)
- Over 10% absence in key stage 3 or 4, excluded in key stage 3 or 4 or have special educational needs at age 15 (SEN/Absent/Excluded)
- Eligible for free school meals during secondary school (FSM)
- Those with none of the above characteristics (Other).

These groups are mutually exclusive and an individual was placed into the first group relevant to them in the hierarchy rather than when they first had a specific characteristic. For example, if a child had been excluded at age 12 but had been in the Children in Need census from the age of 14, they would be placed in the CIN group as it comes first in the hierarchy. The low attainment shown in the above analysis was linked to the characteristics found in these groups so was not considered as a separate group.

**Figure 3** shows the proportion that each of these groups account for in the cohort as a whole and those NEET for the year in 2013/14. This shows that the first two groups in the hierarchy (LAC and CIN) account for just 11% of the cohort but more than half (51%) of those NEET for the year.

**Figure 3: Share of cohort and those NEET for the year by group**
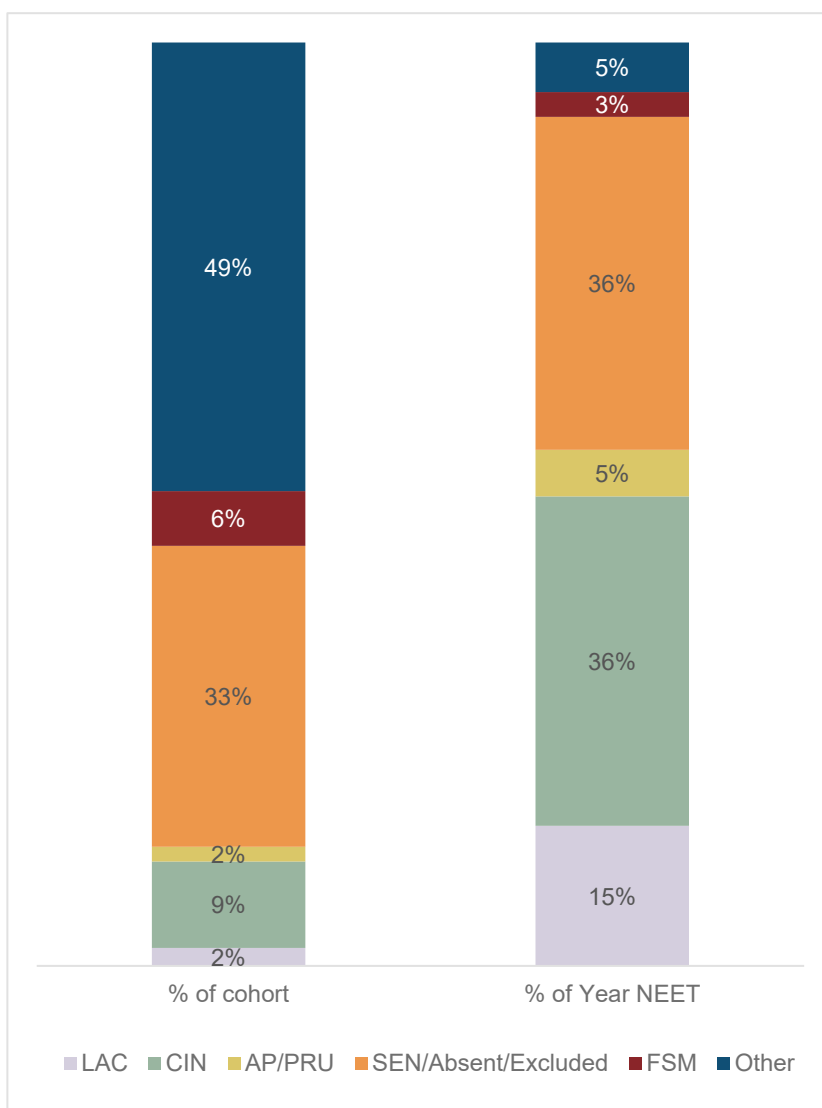


At the other end of the hierarchy, those with none of the highlighted characteristics account for almost half of the cohort (49%) but only 5% of those NEET for the year.

Those in the SEN/Absent/Excluded group have a similar proportion in both the cohort and those NEET for the year.

**Table 2** shows that as well as those in the LAC and CIN groups having the highest proportion NEET for the year (37.1% and 18.2% respectively), they are, on average, NEET for longer during the year. Less than 1% of those with none of the highlighted characteristics are NEET for the year and on average only spend around 2 weeks NEET during the year.

**Table 2: Percentage NEET for the year and average months NEET in 2013/14 by group**

| Group | % NEET for the year | Months NEET |
|-------|--------------------:|------------:|
| LAC | 37.1% | 6.8 |
| CIN | 18.2% | 4.0 |
| AP/PRU | 15.0% | 3.5 |
| SEN/Absent/Excluded | 5.3% | 1.8 |
| FSM | 2.2% | 1.1 |
| Other | 0.5% | 0.4 |
| **Total** | **4.8%** | **1.4** |

Focussing on those who make up the LAC and CIN groups, the next two figures show the extent to which the long-term NEET rate changes according to the number of years young people were recorded as being a looked after child or in the Children In Need census.

**Figure 4: Proportion NEET for the year by number of years as a looked after child**
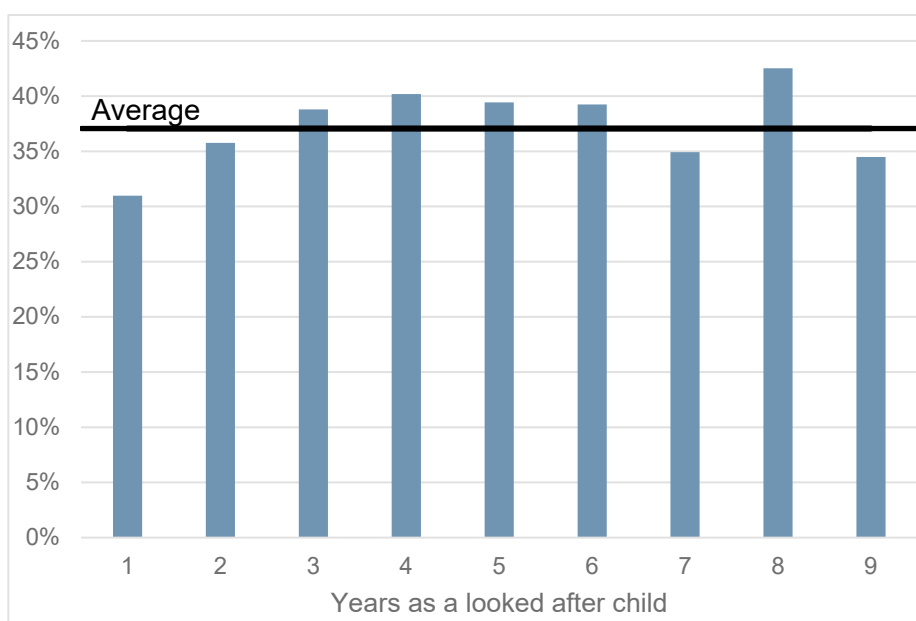
The chart above (**Figure 4**) shows that however long the individual was a looked after child, the NEET for a year rate is consistently high. However, the proportion NEET for the year is higher with each year this individual has been in the Children in Need census (**Figure 5**). Note that these charts focus on those within the two groups and the hierarchy mentioned above has not been applied for this analysis.

**Figure 5: Proportion NEET for the year by number of years in Children in Need census**
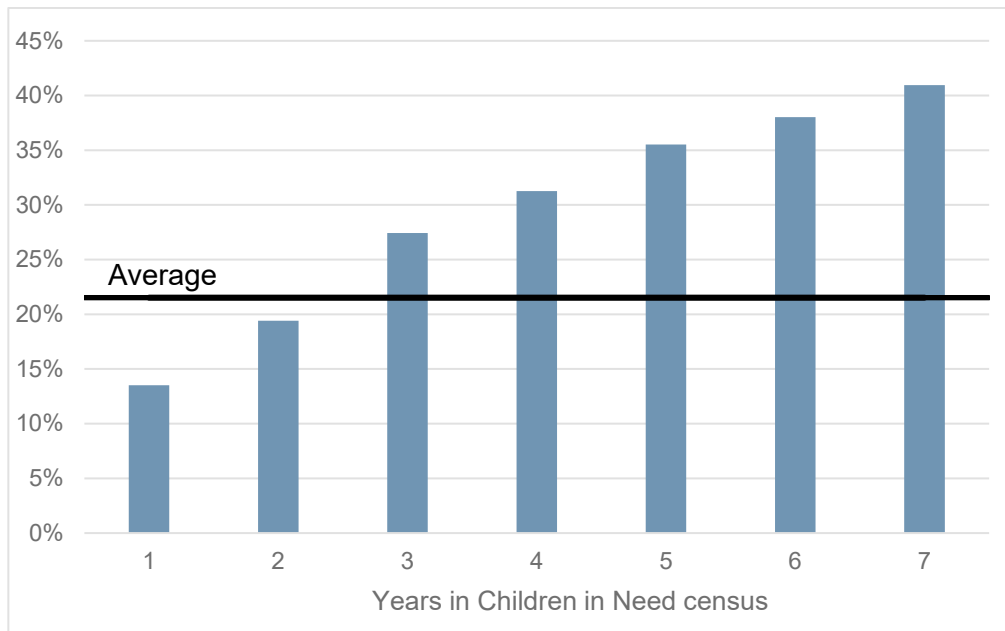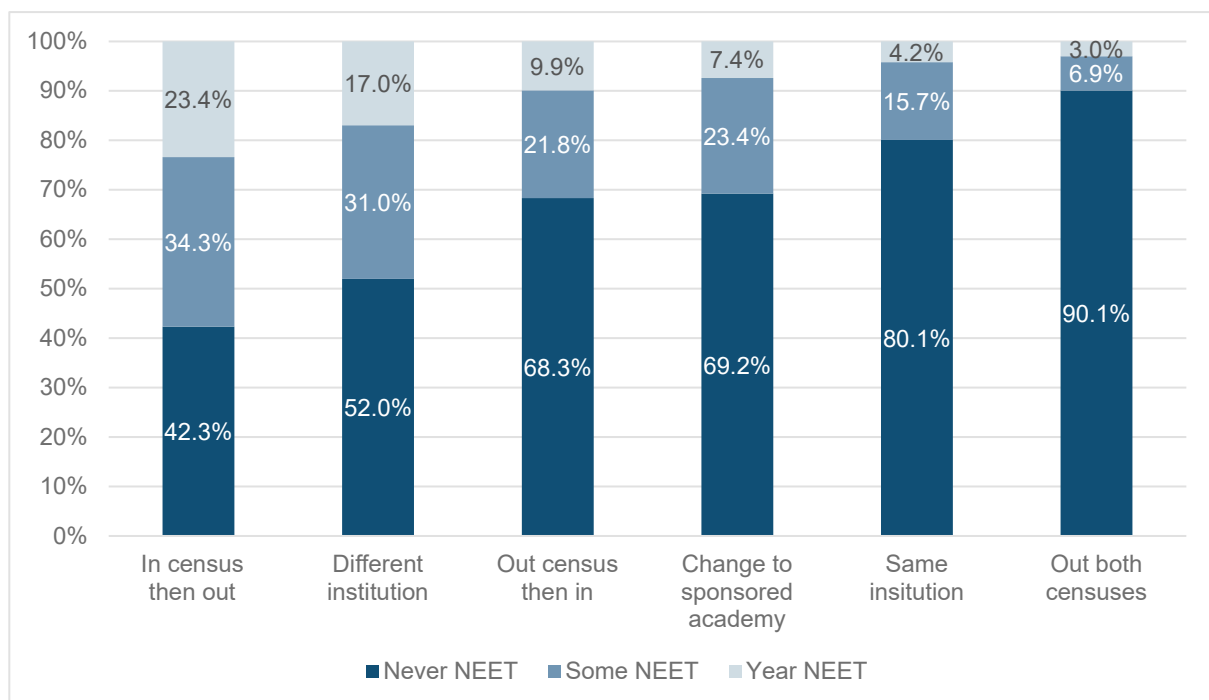


**Figure 6** shows whether people were NEET for the whole year, some of the year or not at all depending on whether they changed institution the year before finishing key stage 4.

**Figure 6: Proportion NEET by institution moves during key stage 4**

This shows that those who were 'in' the census (those who were registered at a single institution and on roll in the spring census) the year before the end of key stage 4 but were either not on roll in the spring census or became dual registered in the last year of key stage 4 ('out') were more likely to be NEET, with almost a quarter (23.4%) being NEET for the year. Those who changed institutions between those two years were also more likely to be NEET. Those who stayed at the same institution or were not in the school census in both years (includes those in independent schools) were the least likely to be NEET three years after finishing key stage 4.

**Figure 7** shows that those who attended 'Outstanding' or 'Good' Ofsted rated institutions at the end of key stage 4 were less likely to be NEET for the year in 2013/14 compared to those attending institutions rated as 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate'.

**Figure 7: Proportion NEET for year by Ofsted rating at end of key stage 4**
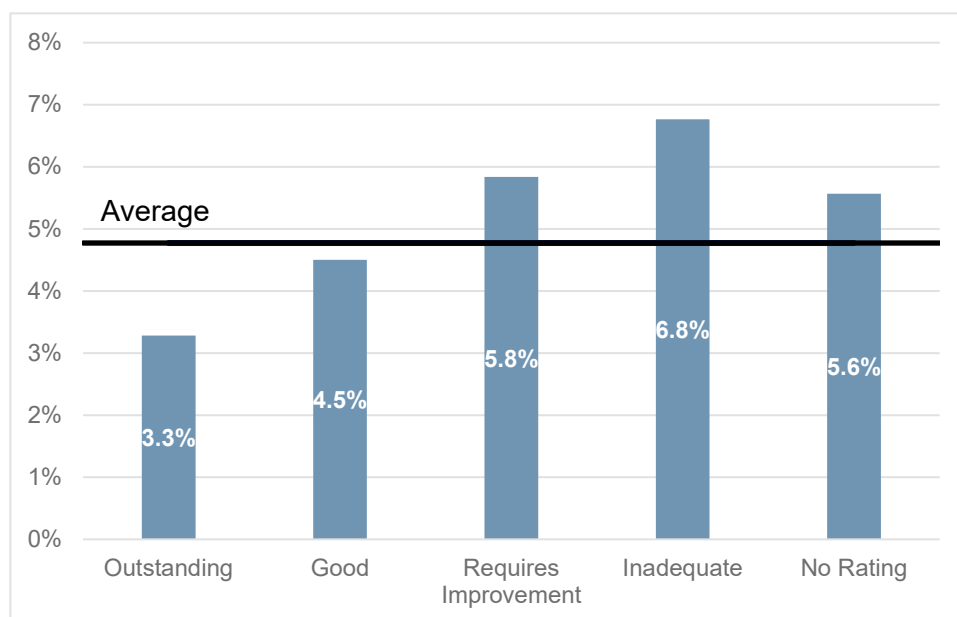
# Annex A – list of acronyms and their definitions

AP – Alternative Provision - refers to places that provide education for children who can't go to a mainstream school.

CIN – Children in Need - children referred to local authority social care services because their health or development is at risk.

DfE – Department for Education.

DWP – Department for Work and Pensions.

FSM – Free School Meals.

HMRC – Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

IDACI – Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index - A subset of the Income Deprivation Domain of the Index of Multiple Deprivation. Each area is given a score showing the percentage of pupils aged under 16 that live in families that are income deprived.

ILR – Individualised Learner Record - Information about learner data that publicly funded colleges, training organisations, local authorities and employers (FE providers) must collect.

KS – Key Stage. More information on each of the key stages can be found at this link explaining the national curriculum.

LAC – Looked After Child – when a child is in the care of the local authority for more than 24 hours.

LEO – Longitudinal Education Outcomes dataset – a DfE data set comprising DWP benefit claimant and HMRC employment data which is matched to the National Pupil Database (NPD).

NCCIS – National Client Caseload Information System.

NEET – Not in Education, Employment or Training.

NPD – National Pupil Database - this contains detailed information about those in state funded education in England.

PRU – Pupil Referral Unit - local authority establishments which provide education for children unable to attend a mainstream school.

SEN – Special Educational Needs.