

Digital Exclusion Profiling of Vulnerable Groups  
**Young People not in Education, Employment or Training  
(NEET): A Profile**



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The findings and recommendations in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Department for Communities and Local Government

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## CONTENTS

<b>Section 1: About the profile</b>	5
<b>Section 2: Who does this Profile include?</b>	6
<b>Section 3: NEETs – Why do they matter?</b>	7
3.1 Costs to the Individual	7
3.2 Costs to Society	8
<b>Section 4: Who makes up the ‘NEET group’?</b>	9
<b>Section 5: What factors contribute to a young person becoming NEET?</b>	11
<b>Section 6: What barriers do NEET young people face?</b>	14
<b>Section 7: What do the numbers tell us?</b>	18
<b>Section 8: Who provides support to NEETs?</b>	21
<b>Section 9: Access to helping services</b>	23
9.1 Barriers and facilitators to accessing services	23
9.2 Preferred methods of accessing services	24
<b>Section 10: Use of ICT</b>	26
10.1 Types of ICT used by young NEETs	28
10.2 Factors affecting views and use of ICT among NEET young people	29
10.3 Safety, vulnerability, and controlling contact	32
10.4 Availability of and access to ICT	33
10.5 Access to help in using ICT	33
10.6 ICT access and skills among professionals	34
10.7 Factors affecting service providers’ views and use of ICT	34
10.8 What Works	35
<b>Section 11: When is the best time to help NEETs?</b>	37
<b>Section 12: What is the Government Doing?</b>	40
12.1 Policies and Legislation	40
12.2 Targets and Measures	44

<b>Section 13: Case Studies</b>	47
13.1 Getting the Systems Right!	47
13.2 Investing in Mobile Learning – MoleNet Projects	49
13.2.1 <i>Lowestoft College</i>	49
13.2.2 <i>Regent and Gateway Colleges, Leicester</i>	50
13.3 Reaching Out to Disadvantaged Young People	51
13.4 Handing over editorial control	53
13.5 Out of school provision IT-style – a route to prevention of NEET status	55
13.6 Virtual Ruksak – Early Stages of an Innovative Project	56
<b>Section 14: Pointers for the Future</b>	59
<b>Section 15: Want to Know More about NEETs?</b>	61

# Section 1

## About the profile

This profile considers young people not in education, training or work. It aims to understand group members' actual and potential interaction with technology. The starting point of the profile is to understand the life circumstances of group members through desk-based research. Our understanding of group members' (potential) engagement with technology has been developed largely through primary research. In particular, focus groups were set up with group members and professionals working with the group.

Detailed findings from the primary research as well as further background to this profile are available from the Department for Communities and Local Government<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> [www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/contact](http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/contact)

## Section 2

### Who does this profile include?

This Profile is intended to give an overview of a group of young people who first came to occupy a distinct place in the national consciousness in 1999, with the publication of an in-depth report<sup>2</sup> from the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU). At that time, there were in England about 161,000 young people between the ages of 16 and 18 years – or around nine per cent of the age group, who were at any one time, outside education, training and work. The report made clear that being ‘inactive’ at this period of life was leading, all too often, to “a descent into the hardest end of the social exclusion spectrum – a variety of relationship, family and health problems, including homelessness, persistent offending or problem drug use.”

The report had immediately followed and dovetailed closely with a White Paper<sup>3</sup> that set out major changes in the framework for post-16 learning, and established the Connexions Service, which became the central provider of mainstream services and support to young people who are NEET (this acronym seems to have come into use soon after the report’s publication).

It should be noted that the wider group of age 14 to 24/25 years is also used with reference to NEETs, and is the age range targeted by Connexions services for young people, and in some of the studies cited in this profile.

<sup>2</sup> SEU (1999), *Bridging the Gap: New Opportunities for 16-18 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training*

<sup>3</sup> DfES (1999), *Learning to Succeed – a New Framework for post-16 Learning*

## Section 3

### NEETs – why do they matter?

The SEU report, *Bridging the Gap*, which is still as relevant today, set out very clearly the consequences both to the individual and to society, of having this significant proportion of young people disengaged from any productive activity, and concluded: “Being outside education, employment and training between 16 and 18 has serious consequences for the individual and society, both in the short and long term. It is a major predictor of later unemployment and for women, also of teenage motherhood.” The report drew on data from the 1970 British Birth Cohort Study<sup>4</sup>, one of several such studies starting roughly every 12 years, that follow a group of many thousands of individuals from birth through their whole life course. This analysis was expanded by Bynner and Parsons in a paper<sup>5</sup> published in 2002.

#### 3.1 Costs to the individual

*Bridging the Gap* showed clearly that, compared with their peers who were in education or work between 16-18, non-participating young people are, by the age of 21, not only likely to be unqualified, untrained and unemployed, but are also likely to earn less if employed, be a parent and experience depression and poor physical health. It is significant that earning less than the average for the age group persists into later life – ie there are long-term financial consequences for the individual. Males are also more likely to acknowledge a criminal record as a barrier to employment.

Even though these later life experiences are common to many people who have grown up in poverty or left school without qualifications, the data showed that being NEET in the 16-18 years is the single most powerful predictor of unemployment at age 21.

The report goes on to survey links between being NEET and crime and drug use. It was known then that 75 per cent of males who appeared before a Youth Court were in no fulltime activity, and 71 per cent of the NEET group reported having used drugs as against 41 per cent of their peers.

<sup>4</sup> Run by the Centre for Longitudinal Studies, Institute of Education, London University

<sup>5</sup> J Bynner and S Parsons (2002), ‘Social Exclusion and the Transition from School to Work, The Case of Young People Not in Education Employment or Training’, *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*



## 3.2 Costs to society

Bridging the Gap looked at the immediate costs related to:

- State Benefits
- Uncompleted courses at school or college
- Offending
- Drugs

Longer-term costs were those of unemployment (loss of tax revenue to the Exchequer and benefits paid to the individuals) and of government support via New Deal, but there was no attempt to estimate costs related to drugs and crime. A report<sup>6</sup> produced in 2002 for the Department for Education and Skills puts the total average lifetime cost of a NEET individual at £97,000, made up from £47,000 in lost resource to the individual and £52,000 loss to society for health and welfare costs<sup>7</sup>.

A report published by the Princes Trust<sup>8</sup> in 2007, concludes with the following paragraph (note that the wider age range of 18-24 is being discussed):

“Unemployment (*of this group*) costs the economy upwards of £90m per week, and youth crime presents a staggering £1 bn bill for the taxpayer each year. Depression caused by underachievement at school could cost the NHS between £11m and £28m a year. Social exclusion is evidently a costly problem for the UK. And this is without taking into account many costs that are harder to measure, relating to inactivity, educational underachievement, crime and being in care.”

So, although there are no reliable estimates of all the costs that stem from the disengagement of young people from education or work, it is very clear that both the range and long-lasting effects on the individual, and the social, cultural and economic effects on wider society, are huge. Hence there is a need for effective and timely interventions at all ages, trying to either prevent a young person from entering the NEET category, or supporting young people to leave it.

<sup>6</sup> Bob Coles, Gary Craig and Julia Johnson (2002), *Estimating the Cost of Not in Education Employment or Training at Age 16-18*, DfES

<sup>7</sup> Note that no present-day equivalent to this study was found; anecdotally amongst a group of professionals, these figures were thought very low even in context of 2002

<sup>8</sup> Centre for Economic Performance (2007), *The Cost of Exclusion – counting the cost of youth disadvantage in the UK*, LSE

## Section 4

### Who makes up the 'NEET group'?

It is quite clear that there are no 'typical' NEETs; every young person is an individual with a unique set of characteristics and background factors. But there are some ways of trying to categorise broad groupings.

The young people who are NEET at some point in their 16-18 years period are likely to be in one of three categories<sup>9</sup>:

- Core NEET – those with social and behavioural problems including those who come from families where worklessness is the norm.
- Floating NEET – comprising young people who lack direction, motivation and tend to have spells of being NEET in between further education courses or employment with no training. This group contributes to the issue of *NEET churn* (repeated failure and drop out from education/training/work back into NEET status).
- Transition/gap year NEET – those young people who have often chosen to take time out before progressing onto further or higher education opportunities, and are likely to return to education, training or employment, but it is not always clear when this will occur.

In the most recent Government strategy document to be published<sup>10</sup> about NEET young people, drawn from figures for 2006, their group characteristics were described as follows – words in italics are added comments:

- Getting older than before – around 50 per cent of the group are 18 compared to 40 per cent five years before
- Gender gap is widening – at age 16, boys are twice as likely as girls to be NEET (*this has closed to a ratio of 3M:2F in the provisional 2007 figures*)
- A higher proportion of the girls are 'inactive' – that is not looking for work or learning (*this description is used to include those who are mothers or carers*)
- 39 per cent of those with no GCSEs are NEET at 16, compared with two per cent of those young people who achieved five or more A\* results
- Persistent absentees from school are seven times more likely to be NEET at age 16

<sup>9</sup> GLA-commissioned report (2007), *What works in preventing and re-engaging young people NEET in London*

<sup>10</sup> DCSF (2008), *Reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET): the strategy*

- Young people with learning difficulties and disabilities are twice as likely to be NEET as those without
- An estimated 20,000 teenage mothers are NEET

Contributory factors to the first bullet point above, (why the average age of the NEETs group is rising) have not yet been factually investigated, but could include:

- In general, there is less personal support available to a young person to sustain them in place once they have moved from education to employment – Connexions Advisors and most of the third sector agencies concentrate on moving their clients into or sustaining them in fulltime education or a work placement with training at 16 and 17. Jobcentre Plus works hard to prepare young people who do not continue with education, or are not ready for an apprenticeship, for a job, but does not invest the same level of resource in sustaining clients once they are in a job.
- From their 18th birthday, a young person should be paid the intermediate level of the Minimum Wage tariff, so becomes more expensive to employ.

## Section 5

# What factors contribute to a young person becoming NEET?

A wide range of factors influence all young people in the transition from childhood to adulthood, summarised in the government's *Aiming High for Young People – a 10 year strategy for positive activities* in July 2007 as:

- Their experiences of education and the labour market
- The society and culture in which they grow up
- Their relationship with parents and families
- Their experiences with their peers and in their leisure time

Young people in England are growing up in a society which by and large has a negative view of young people. While still influenced considerably by the expectations of parents and family, English young people also spend less time with their families than is usual in most western countries. They also spend more time with their peers, and for lower socio-economic groups, this is far less likely to be spent in any sort of positive or constructive activity. Early signs of behavioural difficulties in school, often with low self-esteem at their root, are often correlated with low achievement at 16, and the combination of lack of achievement and an unsupportive family environment, or a disruption in the home caused by illness, relationship breakdown, financial difficulties for whatever reason, is enough to put at risk of disaffection and marginalisation, a minority of young people. Also, females with low self-esteem are more likely to become young mothers, which also make them very likely to become NEET.

A report from the Inclusion Trust<sup>11</sup> gives the figure of as many as 100,000 children being marginalised before the age of 16 through lack of participation in education – for whom the outlook is given as 'bleak', with several hundred thousand more not participating fully in fulltime education for various reasons. The report states that the government does not know the true extent of the problem, that there is a lack of transparency and accurate data, and that circumstances (including target-driven funding for schools and colleges linked to academic success rather than attendance) are conspiring to make the situation worse not better for all young people like these.

<sup>11</sup> The Inclusion Trust (2007), *Out of Sight out of Mind*

*Bridging the Gap* (cited above) identified **educational underachievement, family disadvantage, and family poverty** as the three main factors associated with non-participation. Educational underachievement was often evident throughout the school career, often accompanied by a history of persistent truancy, and possibly exclusion from school. It is possible that some young people may face an additional barrier of worklessness as a generational element. A recent report by the Institute for Employment Studies on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions<sup>12</sup> comments that 'It can be said that cultures of worklessness *may* exist in some areas, within which worklessness, in some cases, is intergenerational.'

A recent research and development project in the Swindon area<sup>13</sup> indicates that it is possible to recognise at an early age, even in primary school, when a young person is in danger of entering the NEET group in the future. Other research in Wiltshire and Swindon<sup>14</sup> has also indicated that the average age when young people in this potential NEET group stop 'trying at school' is between 14 and 15 and that therefore more help with deciding options, along with other support and interventions need to be provided earlier. This latter study also indicates that young people in the NEET group are unlikely to be involved in after school activities or have a positive educational experience but that almost 50 per cent of those in the NEET group who contributed to the study were happy with their situation. It was therefore felt that any 'sales pitch' to attract such young people to consider EET needs to acknowledge this as the starting point.

Other causative issues which *may* contribute to a young person becoming NEET are bereavement, mental health problems, emotional, drug, health (including obesity caused by unhealthy diet), disability or alcohol problems either for the young person or in their immediate family, and offending behaviour leading to involvement with the courts. A young person who becomes homeless as a result of any or a combination of these is also very likely to be NEET, particularly looked-after young people leaving any form of publicly-funded care, who are already likely to have much lower attainment rates at GCSE than their peers.

Young people who face difficulties by means of their status as refugees and asylum seekers, or are from certain ethnic groups where there is also discrimination by employers<sup>15</sup>, or living in poor housing in an economically disadvantaged area with few facilities and sparse public transport (eg isolated rural or some outer city areas) are also more likely to become NEET.

<sup>12</sup> Institute for Employment Studies (2005), *Understanding workless people and communities: A literature review*, pp 2 and 3

<sup>13</sup> Hughes and Opie (March 2008), *NEET Prevention Research and Development Project* [www.swslim.org.uk/research/database/searchresults\\_detail\\_page.asp?ResearchID=2569](http://www.swslim.org.uk/research/database/searchresults_detail_page.asp?ResearchID=2569)

<sup>14</sup> Involvement Work (2008), *Connexions NEET Report First Findings*

<sup>15</sup> DfES Annual Statistics (2007), on 16-19 participation

There are very significant regional variations in the proportions of NEET young people across England, generally following a north-south pattern. At the end of 2007, the Labour Force Survey figures (see Section 7) give the region with the lowest percentage of NEET as the South East, at 5.6 per cent of the cohort, (although the London region is significantly higher at 7.5 per cent) rising to 11.4 per cent in the North East Region. There is a particularly stark difference between the East Midlands (6.5%) and the West Midlands (9%).

A report for the Learning and Skills Development Agency<sup>16</sup> examined the differences between two areas (South East, and Yorkshire and Humber) and listed the following four factors as determining the probability of a young person becoming and remaining NEET:

**Ineffectiveness of financial incentives** – the failure of financial incentives (EMAs etc) to encourage take up of learning and training opportunities appears to be more pronounced in economically deprived regions.

**Differential access to the labour market** – this is worse in areas where there are a lot of small businesses rather than large ones, and employers tend to have less understanding of modern qualifications and do not offer training schemes.

**Membership of disadvantaged communities** – where young people are in communities affected by multi-generational unemployment, suffer discrimination in the labour market, lack role models and access to suitable jobs.

**Residence in areas with poor infrastructure** – referring to transport, inadequate housing, which hamper access to FE and job opportunities.

The issues above contribute to the consideration of the proportions of NEETs by ethnicity, as educational attainment is recognised as being correlated with socio-economic circumstances, and the majority of people in England of south Asian and African heritage live in the 20 per cent most deprived postcode areas. It must be emphasised however, that in actual numbers, the overwhelming majority of non-participating young people are white.

Figures from the LSC<sup>17</sup> for 2007 give the percentages of different ethnic groups of NEET young people, for both national and more local areas.

<sup>16</sup> D Sachdev, B Harries, T Roberts (2006), *Regional and sub-regional variation in NEETs – reasons remedies and impact*, LSDA

<sup>17</sup> <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/LSC/London/lor-NEETDataByEthnicityMar07-da-01nov2007-v1-0.pdf>

## Section 6

### What barriers do NEET young people face?

A Briefing Paper in the current Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education and Training<sup>18</sup> gives an excellent overview of issues and barriers, that seems to draw together all of the key elements mentioned elsewhere in the sources consulted for this profile.

The key issues for NEET young people, that are pre-requisites for further progress, are security, safety, warmth, access to facilities and support. The paper states “Not all of these factors are available or accessible to young people who are outside employment, education and training. Those young people, who are looked after, in temporary or vulnerable accommodation, officially homeless or living with unsupportive families or carers, may be particularly at risk.”

The paper moves through more familiar ground of educational underachievement, crime, drugs, lack of role models, and lack of self-worth, but draws out the interesting issue from the last two of that list, that the long-term stability of a trusted adult person is crucial in helping each young person to overcome their personal mix of challenges. The implications of that requirement are listed as:

- Short-term funding arrangements will have little impact
- The practitioners working with young people need stable contracts with reasonable levels of pay
- A clear need for provision for long-term support, and effective and relevant continuing professional development

One to one key worker support has emerged as an effective model. It would seem that Personal Adviser (PA) roles are best filled by well-trained professionals who may combine youth work, teaching, counselling and brokerage skills and treat young people courteously and as equals within agreed disciplinary codes. There is also evidence from a major study in London<sup>19</sup>, that targeted PA support has made the biggest impact on helping to reduce NEET groups.

The paper identifies a gap in relevant and flexible provision for these young people who are all below Level 2 in attainment, and therefore cannot enter apprenticeship schemes. Having faced failure at GCSE, young people are often unwilling to face college, effectively

<sup>18</sup> *New Approaches to Engaging Youth: Understanding the Problems and Implementing the Solutions 2007-2008 Briefing Paper 2*

<sup>19</sup> Research as Evidence (2007), *Preventing and re-engaging young people NEET in London*

shutting off their main source of a progression route. The paper suggests that colleges identify critical friends/mentors for young people seen to be in danger of non-achievement, but note that if institutions are to be held responsible for progress after a young person has left, (the 'imminent' Ofsted progression measurement) then schools and colleges may be eager to break their association with young people at risk of not achieving positive outcomes.

The young people interviewed in the Review, all of whom could be classified as NEET, were not without ambitions, but they had no clear progression pathway about how they would achieve their goals. Having multiple and serious disadvantages, these aspirations would in any case be difficult for the young people to achieve, setting aside the practical issues of accessibility and housing.

The professionals involved in these discussions clearly identified the barriers caused by short-term funding, multi-agency working – leading to the same young person targeted by several different agencies, each with their own, and sometimes conflicting targets and policies. The target-driven system governing their own work was seen as counter-productive when what was needed was sensitive and flexible support tailored to the needs of each individual. The Education Maintenance Allowance was seen as too little (less than available through a combination of other benefits), too bureaucratic to apply for, and causing problems for young people whose parents were earning above the threshold, but who did not have their full support. Some young people, wary of leaving a 'paper trail' also did not want to set up the necessary bank account. Information, Advice and Guidance was needed to be relevant and case-specific, and available much earlier to young people at risk, not just immediately before transition phases at 16 and 18.

### **Qualitative Research on Barriers and Issues**

The remainder of this section is based on the findings of the interviews and focus groups with NEET young people and some professionals who work with them, which were carried out during the development of this profile.

The research began by identifying the 'starting points' for young people not in education, employment or training. Figure 1 summarises the key issues facing young NEETs, as identified by young people themselves and by the professionals working with them. The issues noted in Figure 1 are discussed in the sections that follow.

Professionals emphasised the importance of recognising that the young people attending these focus groups are not those who have completely 'disengaged' from education. By virtue of the fact that they are working with service providers, they are to some extent on the road to being 're-engaged' with education. However, professionals point out that there are other young people who have disengaged more fully and are not receptive to receiving the types of help they offer. Beyond those profiled here, there is therefore a more disadvantaged 'group' of young NEETs who are not yet re-engaged to the point of seeking or receiving help.



**Figure 1: Key issues facing NEETs****Housing circumstances:**

- possibly living with family or foster carers
- possibly living in care home
- 'sofa surfing' (no permanent home)
- possible need for social housing (ie, moving on from family home, foster home, care home)

**Education/skills:**

- sense of 'failure' from previous negative educational experiences (now associated with lack of confidence in relation to learning)
- difficulties with mainstream education (possibly linked to special educational needs, eg, dyslexia, behavioural problems, etc)
- likely to need help with basic skills, social skills
- likely to need vocational skills/certificates/qualifications

**Key life issues/perspectives:**

- cultural disaffection (eg, fourth generation benefit recipients)
- boredom/desire to get out of the house/have something to do
- possible restrictions on freedom (linked to youth offending restrictions)
- lack of money
- teenage pregnancy/young parenthood

**Housing**

It is clear from Figure 1 that young NEETs are a diverse group. Some may lack access to stable housing while others live with a family member or are looked after by the state, living in a foster or care home. They may therefore be living in fairly chaotic circumstances or alternatively, they may have a stable base. Service providers noted that while not having a stable base might be considered a barrier to education and learning for people used to living at a fixed address, it might pose less of a barrier to those used to living a more transient life. They stressed the importance of understanding the needs of individuals and working with the needs they identify rather than making assumptions about their needs.

**Educational history**

In terms of their educational history, they are likely to have disengaged from learning after a history of negative educational experiences. Their negative educational background may also be associated with special educational needs that have not previously been fully understood and addressed (eg, dyslexia, behavioural problems linked to physical or mental health problems, etc.). This is commonly associated with a sense of failure and negative

emotions surrounding learning. Professionals emphasised that this sense of failure and avoidance of learning is an important barrier that needs to be over-come in re-engaging these young people with education, training and ultimately employment.

### **Life perspectives**

Another broad area relates to the life perspectives of young NEETs. Again, they are not a homogenous group, but there were recurrent themes in the accounts of young people and professionals. From young people's perspectives, there is a sense of filling time, but with no particular purpose- they described feeling bored, spending their days playing computer games, driving around, in the house with nothing to do. The time they spent with service providers gave them something definite to work on and possibly a goal to work towards. It also provided a sense of support, social interaction, and a place to go as well as adding structure to their days.

Another important point noted by professionals is that for some young people, their NEET status may be directly linked to their family history and to what they described as a more deep seated 'cultural disaffection'. For example, some young NEETs are from workless families where they represent the fourth generation living on benefits. For these young people, there may be no expectation or aspiration to work. In these circumstances, the idea of re-engagement with education and learning is a more foreign concept, and not something which is supported by their family or social circle.

### **Previous criminal history**

Some young NEETs have also been involved in some form of criminal activity in the past and have formal restrictions on their behaviour as a result. These restrictions may represent new barriers to re-engagement with learning and employment and may exacerbate the sense of boredom commonly noted by these young people. They may also need to maintain regular contact with organisations such as a Youth Offending Team.

### **Teenage pregnancy/young parenthood**

The focus groups conducted here consisted largely of young men, and as a result the views of young women are not well represented. For young men, there may be issues of young fatherhood to deal with while for young women who are NEET, teenage pregnancy and parenthood may be key issues in their lives.

## Section 7

# What do the numbers tell us?

### Latest Figures for NEETs

In the 16-18 year age group, the latest provisional Government statistics<sup>20</sup> (known as Statistical First Release – SFR, which is the measurement against which the national performance targets are judged) for young people who are NEET, released on 19 June 2008 but referring to the full year of 2007, show a fall from 10.4 per cent at end 2006 to 9.4 per cent at end 2007, giving the total number of NEETs at end 2007 as just below 189,500. Corresponding with this fall, all the participation rates in education, employment or training for young people ages 16, 17, and 18 have risen, with the highest increase of 2.3 per cent being for 18 year olds remaining in fulltime education.

These figures are more robust in absolute numbers than either the quarterly Labour Force Survey (LFS) figures, which sample a proportion of households and make national estimates, or the quarterly data from Connexions (known as Client Caseload Information system – CCIS) that only covers the young people whose status is known to Connexions, mainly those educated in the maintained sector, omitting young people who are for example in custody, or away on a gap year. CCIS figures do however provide data at local level and a more detailed breakdown of the NEET population to be made. Therefore the Connexions data is useful, but is not directly comparable with the SFR figures.

CCIS classifies the NEET group into four main types<sup>21</sup>:

- Group 1 – young people who are doing an activity not counted as EET – eg gap year students, those undertaking voluntary work and those in custody.
- Group 2 – young people with an identifiable barrier to participation, as they have a child, or are experiencing serious illness or disability – some of these individuals may be able to participate, but others may require specific help
- Group 3 – Those young people whose activity is known but are not in a specific group outlined above.
- Group 4 – Unknowns

<sup>20</sup> DCSF, Participation in Education, Employment and Training by 16-18 Year Olds in England

<sup>21</sup> DCSF, NEET Statistics Quarterly Brief

If the percentages given by the CCIS are applied to the latest SFR figures for 2007, they split as follows between the four groups:

- Group 1 – 11% 20,845
- Group 2 – 16% 30,320
- Group 3 – 59% 111,805
- Group 4 – 14% 26,530

The gender-related split of annual totals of young people who are NEET since 2004 is given in the table below, showing that progress in re-engaging young people in 2006-2007 has been more successful with males than females.

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Males</b>	102,800	122,300	120,000	104,000
<b>Females</b>	87,000	94,000	89,700	85,400

A paper published by the Treasury in 2004<sup>22</sup> that reformed the financial support for post-16 participation in education contains a useful appendix that reviews the participation of all post-16 young people, as well as the NEET group. It indicates that the NEET group consists of 60 per cent who are unemployed and the rest classed as 'inactive'. It also points out that there are roughly equal numbers of men and women. The paper notes that young men who are NEET are more likely to be unemployed, whilst young women who are NEET are more likely to be inactive. Half of the 'inactive' group were parents or carers and mainly female, and six per cent were sick or disabled – again a majority were female.

Although the overall average percentage of NEETs remains difficult to reduce, it was noted in Section 4 above that most of these young people do not remain as NEET throughout the period when they are 16-18. They move in and out of work and education, (NEET churn) with only one per cent of the group remaining as NEET through all of the 16-18 years. No data was found about the typical length of the spells either of engagement or disengagement. Those in the 'persistent' NEET group are almost always young people with a mix of extremely complex problems. Research released from the London School of Economics<sup>23</sup> in July 2008, states however that the actual number of 16-17 year olds basically doing nothing is double the Government figure, and puts the level as high as 18 per cent.

<sup>22</sup> HM Treasury (2004), *Supporting Young People to Achieve: towards a new deal for skills* [www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/8/4/young\\_people\\_493.pdf](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/8/4/young_people_493.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> [www.guardian.co.uk/uk/feedarticle/7664066](http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/feedarticle/7664066)

No information could be found concerning the patterns of being 'engaged' and then 'disengaged', for these young people, so the overall proportions of time spent as being 'inactive' 16-18 are not known. The introduction of a system of Unique Learner Numbers, which has had pilot trials following a national consultation in 2003-4, would bring the potential benefits of tracking participation by learners across different providers and over a period of time, and could therefore help in researching the patterns of short-term participation by young people who are NEET.

## Section 8

### Who provides support to NEETs?

Young people aged 16-18 years have access to a range of services provided by agencies from public, private and third sectors, ranging from schools and colleges, to health services, sport and leisure clubs etc. Connexions was originally established as a universal service for young people, and has information services that can be accessed for local and national information, but its more labour-intensive services are directed mainly for young people who are in some way 'at risk', starting at age 14 through schools. Schools will also, as a result of new measures in the so-called NEETS Strategy<sup>24</sup> launched in late 2007, have access to destinations data on their leavers, with the aim of encouraging schools to evaluate their Information, Advice and Guidance services for pupils.

The majority of young people can access the services they need against a supportive family background, increasing financial resources provided by part-time casual work and possibly their own motorised transport as they move from 16 to 18. They also find information and support from a group of friends. Their educational attainments and available facilities allow them access to the internet, to enable them to search the information not provided through other networks.

Nevertheless, it has been recognised that the available services are not as 'joined-up' as they could or should be, with particular problems for vulnerable young people needing support from a wide range of different services, local and national. The two main sources for mainstream services for young people – one concerned with child safety and personal development, and the other with educational achievement have until a few years ago been dealt with in entirely separate departments of local authorities for example. However, all that has changed, or is in the process of change, and Children's Trusts in each area are not only bringing together local authority services of education, youth work and child protection alongside Connexions services, but also adding in all the other specialist services for health, youth justice etc under the general policy development of Targeted Youth Support (TYS).

<sup>24</sup> [www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/documents/neet\\_strategy\\_0803.pdf](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/documents/neet_strategy_0803.pdf)

The TYS Guide<sup>25</sup> lists who it is written for, which amply demonstrates how complex and over-arching this initiative has to be – it is for strategic leads, operational managers and frontline staff working in:

*Youth services, schools, health services, voluntary and community sector agencies, Connexions, education welfare, behaviour support, drugs and alcohol services, sexual health services, teenage parent support workers, special educational needs coordinators, child and adolescent mental health services, counselling services, information, advice and guidance providers, housing and housing support, youth offending and the police.*

Related programmes are listed as:

*Extended services in and around schools, positive activities for young people, the young peoples' development programme, positive futures, youth inclusion programmes, neighbourhood policing, and local authority/PCT teenage pregnancy strategies.*

TYS is aimed at early intervention, prevention, and targeted support via multi-agency structures, that is lasting and sustainable, removes duplication and overlap, involves young people and families in their own choices, and in supporting other young people, and builds aspirations and resilience.

A listing of some key national organisations that provide services to the NEET group is given in Section 15.

<sup>25</sup> DCSF (2007), *Targeted Youth Support: a guide*

## Section 9

# Access to helping services

### 9.1 Barriers and facilitators to accessing services

Figure 2 provides an overview of factors identified by young people and service providers, who were interviewed for the development of this profile, as factors encouraging or discouraging young NEETs from using helping services. These are key considerations which apply equally well whether the services in question are provided by the public or the third sector. They represent a summary of what to do and what to avoid in delivering services to young people who are NEET.

**Figure 2: Barriers and facilitators to service use among NEETs**

#### Barriers

- **Limited attention span** (young NEETs need to be able to access help/info quickly and easily or they will give up)
- **Poor literacy skills** (limited reading ability; text based promotion or delivery of services may not be well suited to this client group; would rather 'hear' the message than read it)
- **Poor telephone skills** (telephone-based service delivery requires telephone skills and patience; NEETs may need help with both)
- **Unsafe or 'alienating' environments** for service access- (libraries and school may be problematic but internet café type environment might be okay; home-based learning may be preferred by some)
- May **lack home access to computer and Internet** (problem for solely online service delivery such as social housing bidding systems; restricted access to information available online)
- Any **costs** associated with service use (eg 10p for a text about bus timing will discourage service use)
- **Negative previous educational experiences**- will avoid 'traditional' learning environments or teaching approaches



**Figure 2: Barriers and facilitators to service use among NEETs (continued)****Facilitators**

- Provision of **technology at home** along with **connectivity** and **help** in using IT
- **Signposting** and **holistic service** provision (one stop shop – provide answers directly or provide access to someone with the answers)
- **Personal support** – provide people to ask (eg, Personal Advisor, mentor)
- **Easily accessible information** (eg a person with the answers; touchscreen searching; free texts with jobs information sent direct to young person)
- **Free access** to services (ie, no cost associated with use – including no costs associated with staying in touch with service providers; free access to Internet; free access to hardware or other learning resources)
- **Financial support** (eg, paying course fees, helping with test fees, costs of vocational certificates)
- **24 hour access to** help, guidance, support (access to help when required)
- **confidence building** via small steps and support throughout
- ‘hooks’ to **engage their interest** (eg, find out what they’re interested in)
- enable use of **facilities for fun/leisure/socialising** so it’s not all about ‘work’
- **less ‘formal’** provision/shouldn’t feel like ‘school’
- **local access** (ie, available within walking distance or travel expenses paid)
- **Positively engage family** members and others around the young person (eg, enable ‘family learning’ via home access to internet and computer)
- **Referrals** to services from trusted helpers

## 9.2 Preferred methods of accessing services

Generally, the young people attending the focus groups preferred to access services in person, visiting a local office and having a discussion face to face. This was particularly so for more complicated issues where the answer to a question may depend upon personal circumstances, such as for benefits and housing advice. In these cases, while it was thought that the Internet might provide a good first port of call for information (ie, to make you aware of what you may be entitled to), it was not viewed as a good way to access services.

There were several reasons for this including:

- Difficulties with reading
- Confusion caused by complicated text (for example on websites)
- Difficulties finding the information sought
- Inability to access the Internet at home or when required
- Inability to ask questions and obtain clear answers

In some cases, young people also discussed relying on the help of a third party, for example someone from a youth club, to provide advice and guidance in accessing benefits or housing. These intermediaries could therefore be crucial in terms of 'signposting' and supporting young people dealing with difficult issues.

Figure 3 provides an overview of 'contact points' used by the young people who attended the focus groups. These are 'venues' (both physical and virtual) which are visited by young NEETs and could be used for advertising or accessing services of relevance to them. In some communities, it is also likely that places of worship would be regularly attended by young people, but this did not emerge as a key contact point among those attending these focus groups.

### Figure 3: Contact points for NEETs

#### Physical venues:

Connexions  
JobCentre Plus  
Youth organisations (eg, Apex)  
Youth Offending Team  
Housing Associations/hostels  
Public transport (eg, buses)  
'Clubbing' venues

#### Online sites visited:

MSN (messenger or web messenger service)  
YouTube  
Facebook, Bebo, My Space, High Five  
JobCentre Plus website  
Google  
Online learning sites (eg, ASDAN, BBC Bitesize)

## Section 10

### Use of ICT

It is common amongst adults today to make the assumption that all young people, without exception, can 'do' technology, and that, because of access at school, all of them grow up using the internet as second nature, with only the means of access sometimes being an issue. While this is in the main true for young people who have a stable attendance at school throughout their school career, for those who are not in school, for whatever reason, some will miss out and therefore end up on the wrong side of the digital divide. Young people who are NEET are very likely to have varying skills from their mainstream peers – a very clearly-produced resource pack in Scotland for working with NEETs<sup>26</sup> tells teaching staff to be aware of different abilities and IT skills.

A report<sup>27</sup> written for Guideline Career Services in 2001, as Connexions was developing, recommended that ICT would be best used within Connexions by developing email and websites for information provision. However it noted that while most young people even then said that they had internet access, its use for other than social networking and information was limited and the young people did not see it as a tool to help them with problem solving. They also were resistant to technology replacing face-to-face services.

Almost all young people like using technology and computers, and the most widespread 'gadget' is the mobile phone, and its use for text messaging with peers is almost universal amongst young people. However, while there have been a few pilots to try and communicate with young people using text messaging, anecdotal evidence from both Connexions and the Probation Service highlight the issue that even young people in relatively stable homes very frequently change their phones and their numbers, lose them or have them stolen, so this method of communication for service provision is not reliable over time.

The Computers for Disadvantaged Pupils scheme is a DCSF programme aimed at helping some of the most disadvantaged secondary children improve their education and life skills by putting a computer in their home. Giving these pupils computers can provide motivation to learn as well as developing key ICT skills, enabling them to experience the same opportunities as their peers and providing benefits for both the student and the school and family.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> learndirect Scotland, Learning Centre Resource Pack – NEET

<sup>27</sup> Wilson and Mee (2001), *Developing ICT for delivering CEG in Schools*

<sup>28</sup> Becta, Computers for Pupils: [http://localauthorities.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=fd&catcode=la\\_fu\\_03](http://localauthorities.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=fd&catcode=la_fu_03)

The fact that most young people do respond to working with digital technologies when they have access to them, can be inferred from the numbers of initiatives at FE Colleges to develop 'mobile learning', usually targeted at disengaged young people, or young people who find the structured approach of mainstream learning too difficult. Examples are usefully brought together in a network known as 'MoLeNET'<sup>29</sup>. Some of these are described later in this document.

Gender-specific data on young people using digital technologies is hard to come by – one example is in an evaluation of the usage of the Connexions Direct website<sup>30</sup>. Connexions had already identified that teenage boys, young people from ethnic minority backgrounds particularly Muslim youth, and young people with disabilities, were low users of this facility – the majority of young people participating in the online survey were females, and their majority usage of the internet was social networking and leisure. Within the focus groups, a significant minority said that they would not normally use a website for seeking information, and there was ignorance of the significances of the various URL extensions (.com, .co.uk, .net etc). Opinion was divided amongst young people about whether they would make use of websites with the .gov.uk extension. Some felt that knowing that a website was connected to government would engender trust in the information provided, but others felt that the information may be presented in a way to support the government agenda.

A recent report for Becta<sup>31</sup> by researchers at the University of Lancaster, based on views from interviews and consultations with more than 350 NEET young people found some very mixed messages on what really works for young people, and emphasised yet again that there is no single answer – a range of technologies will be needed to help tackle the issues across the range of young people. Useful tables on internet access and usage, which is relatively high, and some gender differences in preferred technologies are given – eg young men use interactive television for music and DVD watching, and like gaming machines more than girls, who use computers and laptops but also prefer a radio to listen to music.

There is evidence which shows that provision of digital technologies alone is insufficient to engage learners. Devins<sup>32</sup> *et al* 183 (2003) found that in the "Wired up Communities Programme" where the technology and the internet were provided to geographically close communities, over 25 per cent reported that they did not access it. Of those who did, most were in employment and had been successful in education, indicating the influence of cultural and contextual factors in internet adoption and use.

<sup>29</sup> [www.molenet.org.uk](http://www.molenet.org.uk)

<sup>30</sup> C Lambley A Smith and L Fairbrother (2007), *Connexions Direct Website Evaluation*

<sup>31</sup> Passey, Williams and Rogers, (April 2008), *Assessing the potential of e-learning to support re-engagement amongst young people with Not in education, employment or training (NEET) status*

<sup>32</sup> Devins and Darlow *et al* (2003), *Evaluation of the Wired up Communities Programme*, Metropolitan University, Leeds

By contrast, it is reported by the Inclusion Trust's Notschool.net initiative, (described in section 12) that almost 100 per cent of their teenagers whose starting point is disaffection from all learning and education are engaged by their combination of digital technologies and human support. In short, provision of digital technologies without appropriate human intervention is not a useful measure in moving young people away from being NEET.

The rest of the material in this section is derived from interviews and focus groups carried out for this profile.

## 10.1 Types of ICT used by young NEETs

Generally, these young people were comfortable with a range of different types of ICT. They were not necessarily aware of having formally learned their ICT skills and instead described having acquired them as part of 'growing up'.

Although there was a general sense of comfort with ICT, there were young people in each focus group who seemed to be less engaged with ICT and who lacked personal access to more common forms of ICT, such as mobile telephones. Figure 4 provides an overview of the types of ICT used by the young people in the focus groups and what each was used for.

**Figure 4: Forms and nature of ICT use among young NEETs**

***Mobile phones are used for:***

- Phone calls
  - social calls prioritised
  - use is rationed due to expense
- Texting
  - cheaper than calls so preferred
  - will avoid texting for information if a charge is incurred, eg, bus schedules;
  - problems with reading/writing make texting problematic for some;
- Cameras
- Music
- Games
- Internet-not usually used via mobiles because it is free to use via broadband connections available elsewhere

### Figure 4: Forms and nature of ICT use among young NEETs (*continued*)

#### **Computers are used for:**

- The Internet:
  - MSN free texting service (quicker than texting via mobile phone and free)
  - Social networking sites (Bebo, Facebook, YouTube, online chatrooms)
  - Downloads of movies, music
  - Online learning (eg ASDAN – basic skills practice online, BBC Bitesize, driving theory test practice)
  - Research (eg information about prospective jobs/employers; other types of information required – eg, benefits, housing)
  - Bidding for social housing (but problematic if they lack personal access to the Internet)
  - Games
  - Shopping (though possibly just to check stock availability at local shops or accessed using someone else's PayPal account)
- Word processing – for writing letters to employers, work related to basic skills, etc

#### **Games consoles** (X-Box, Playstation, Wii) for:

- 'chilling'
- relieving boredom (ie, YOT curfew of 7pm and 'nothing else to do')

#### **Digital TV** for:

- Watching recorded shows
- Information (eg, football scores)

#### **iPod/MP3 players** (less commonly discussed) for:

- music

## 10.2 Factors affecting views and use of ICT among NEET young people

There were a number of issues identified in the focus groups with young people and front line professionals as factors affecting use of ICT among this group. Each of these is outlined below.

## Staying in touch

A key motivating factor for these young people in using technology was to maintain social contacts. They used mobile phones (primarily texting) for this, but MSN's free chat service was also very popular among those interviewed. Social networking sites were also used for entertainment, but young people were aware that others may present themselves differently online than they are in person. This may therefore represent less an opportunity to make new friends for them than to be engaged in an online community. E-mail was not raised as an important means of staying in touch among these young people.

Some also discussed using their mobile phone to inform others (eg, parents or carers) of their movements or to let service providers know if they will be late for an appointment. Less commonly, it was felt useful to have a mobile phone in case of emergency (notably with free calls to 999).

Service providers working with young people also noted the prevalence of texting among young people and between young people and their key workers. Although e-mail was also occasionally used between young people and service providers, this appeared to be a less common means of maintaining contact.

There were also difficulties highlighted in relation to keeping in contact via young people's mobile phones. For example, young people frequently change their mobile numbers possibly because their phones are frequently lost or stolen or because they are upgrading to newer models. This implies the need to regularly update mobile phone contacts for young people if this is to be used as an effective form of communication.

## Entertainment

Another important motivating factor underpinning the use of ICT among this group is its entertainment value. Apart from any time spent with the service providers, they lacked structure in their days (as is common with other unemployed people). When asked to describe what they tend to do during the course of a day, this generally included attending learning and jobsearch sessions at the service organisation through which they were contacted, playing football, driving around, clubbing in the evenings (if they had money and no YOT curfew), and playing computer games or using social networking sites. As these groups consisted almost exclusively of young men, this probably represents a set of activities more typical among young NEET males rather than females. Indeed, some described using the computer for games and networking for up to eight hours per day.

## Cost

Cost is a critical issue determining use of ICT among these young people. As noted, some did not have a mobile phone and felt that it was too expensive to use a mobile as they did not have a job. Those attending the groups discussed using pay-as-you-go payment systems, but some also had mobile phone contracts. One example of the latter was a discounted rate contract of £5 per month which was available through their parent's mobile phone contract. The disadvantage of running out of credit on a pay-as-you-go contract was also discussed.

Service providers noted that some young people are also able to obtain special deals via network providers- for example, obtaining 300 free texts if they top up their credit £10 per month. The free texts then enable the young person to stay in touch with service providers without using their phone credit.

### **Methods of avoiding costs**

In order to reduce the costs of staying in touch, young people highlighted a range of methods they use. These included: texting rather than calling; using the free chat service available via MSN; avoiding use of their mobile for non-social calls; and avoiding using services involving payment when a free alternative is available (eg, not using the bus schedule text service which costs 10p when they could walk to the bus shelter and check the schedule; using a landline for free local calls rather than their mobile). Service providers also sometimes had pre-arranged methods of contact with young people to avoid them being charged for phone calls. For example, the young person would text the provider to ask them to ring. Alternatively, the young person would let the phone ring once and hang up. The service provider would then use 1471 to retrieve the number and ring them back. The latter is apparently an established practice referred to as 'one bell-ing'.

### **Restricted access to more expensive forms of ICT**

Some young people noted that particular forms of ICT are more inaccessible because of the cost associated with buying the relevant equipment or connectivity. This included digital television (though some young people did have access to this at home) and broadband internet access at home (though again, some did have home access to this).

Service providers noted that digital television, computers and broadband access is available to young people living in care homes and in some areas, looked after young people are also provided with a computer and access to broadband in foster home settings. This is viewed as essential provision to ensure young people's future economic well being as part of the Every Child Matters agenda.

Linked to the general issue of access to ICT, one service provider highlighted unpublished research done by their organisation which showed that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are also likely to be disadvantaged in their access to and skills in using ICT. This was attributed to lack of access to ICT at home because it is unaffordable to these families, and lack of having acquired ICT skills at school because they disengaged from school at a young age.

### **Reading ability/basic skills needs**

Some young people mentioned the fact that they were taking basic skills courses and highlighted that their reading skills were not very strong. This was an issue particularly in the use of some forms of ICT, such as searching for information using the Internet or texting via mobiles or MSN. Although some felt that poor reading or writing skills was less of a problem with texting (as formal writing skills are not required), others did find texting problematic. They described searching for information on the Internet as difficult and confusing.



## 10.3 Safety, vulnerability, and controlling contact

### Safety in the use of ICT

Although issues of safety could be a barrier to the use of some forms of ICT (such as reluctance to have a mobile phone because of the likelihood of it being stolen), these young people were aware of safety issues in the use of ICT and appeared to be self-regulating. For example, they were aware of people misrepresenting themselves on social networking sites and commonly limited the amount of personal information they shared (eg, refraining from sharing personal contact details). There were exceptions to this, but they discussed having been told about this at school.

The young people in these focus groups were also generally aware of the potential for fraud on the Internet, for example in relation to the theft of credit card details or online purchases where goods were never sent. They were commonly reluctant to provide their personal details over the Internet and instead discussed using a relative's account to make any purchases online. This may also be because they do not have access to financial products such as credit or debit cards in their own name, though this was not discussed directly.

Service providers also noted the importance of keeping young people safe on the Internet. Some restricted access to particular sites in order to guarantee the online safety of young people using their services. However, they noted that a balance needs to be struck between enabling access to sites that young people want to use (eg MSN and other social networking sites) and acting as 'nanny' by restricting access to these same sites where young people could place themselves in dangerous situations. They feel there is a role here for education to ensure that young people are effectively self-regulating. However, as noted in young people's own comments, it would appear that they commonly are aware of these issues.

### Controlling contact

A final issue related to controlling contact. Some young people described actively avoiding being contacted and limiting access to their mobile number. This is partly because they do not necessarily want others to be aware of their whereabouts, but also because they do not want to be charged for and have the nuisance of receiving unsolicited calls or texts.

Front line professionals were also aware of young people 'screening' their calls and responding if they recognised the phone number or not, depending on whether they wanted to speak to the caller.

## 10.4 Availability of and access to ICT

Some of those attending the groups had access to a computer and the Internet at home while others needed to rely on service providers for access to these types of ICT. The lack of home access to the Internet could provide a barrier to some services which are available exclusively online. For example, some social housing is now accessed via an online bidding system. If the young person lacks access to the Internet at home, then they are reliant on third parties to help them bid at the appropriate moment. There were examples of young people feeling that they had missed out on housing because they could not get access to the Internet at the crucial moment.

Service providers also highlighted this as an example of the poor use of technology where those most in need of services are potentially least able to access them.

## 10.5 Access to help in using ICT

In addition to access per se, there was also the issue of obtaining help in using ICT if they encountered a problem. Young people commonly noted that while service providers' staff were willing to help, they did not necessarily have the relevant ICT skills to resolve the problem. Similarly, in using ICT at home, some young people described showing their parent or carer how to use ICT. They could not therefore rely on others around them for help.

Although the young people attending the focus groups appeared to have well developed ICT skills because they used ICT for a broad range of uses, several service providers highlighted that young people vary considerably in their level of ICT skills. Notably, while they may be very adept at using ICT for social networking or using games, they may be less skilled at the use of ICT for key vocational purposes, such as Word processing or spreadsheets. Furthermore, some young people may not have acquired ICT skills prior to leaving school and therefore need to be taught the basics and provided with practical help in using ICT. Some service providers organised small ICT learning groups for this purpose where young people are taught basic ICT skills and assisted in using them for practical applications (eg, web searches, CV writing).

## 10.6 ICT access and skills among professionals

One theory explored in the research is that frontline professionals working with NEETs may lack access to technology and ICT skills themselves. If this were the case, it would limit the extent to which these professionals were able to help young people to engage with and use ICT. As noted earlier, this research is qualitative, so cannot provide any indication of the prevalence of ICT use and skills among service providers working with NEET clients. However, among those organisations with staff participating in the focus groups and telephone interviews, ICT appeared to be widely used by frontline staff. Indeed, it was used both in relation to their direct work with young people and in their administrative work for the organisation.

Types of ICT commonly used by staff included: mobile phones, laptops, and PCs. Blackberries were also mentioned, but less commonly. Specific applications regularly used by staff included: the Internet, e-mail, databases, Microsoft Word and other Office applications.

Young people attending the groups generally felt that staff were able to help them to use ICT when they required it.

## 10.7 Factors affecting service providers' views and use of ICT

Service providers, including front line professionals dealing directly with the client group, discussed a number of ways in which they used ICT in their work. There was no indication among those interviewed that lack of access to ICT resources or skills was an issue within their organisations (although it should be remembered that the research is qualitative and cannot be taken as an indication of prevalence more widely).

Key drivers of the use of ICT were:

- the need to maintain contact with clients and with colleagues both within their own organisation and in other organisations to whom clients might be referred
- the need to access information via the Internet to be used for client referrals as well as to ensure best practice within the organisation (based on latest evidence)
- the need to use computer software packages for data management, monitoring, tracking and retrieval. This was essential both internally for management information and externally to ensure that appropriate evidence was available for funding purposes.
- Among this particular client group, tracking was seen as very important by some organisations as a means of ensuring ongoing progression of young people and to safeguard against them 'slipping through the net' and disappearing from the statistics.

## Ways in which ICT was used among service providers

For **communication with clients**:

- Mobile phones used for texting or phoning clients.

To maintain **contact with colleagues** (including other service providers):

- E-mail for daily contact with colleagues
- Mobile phones or blackberries to maintain contact while out of the office

Accessing **information via Internet** for signposting and advice provision:

- Use of PCs while in the office
- Some had laptops with wireless connections to enable access to the Internet and e-mail while out of the office (less commonly)

Software used for **data analysis** and **routine monitoring**:

- Use spreadsheets, databases to track client progress
- Use of information from databases to provide evidence for funders

## 10.8 What works

Professionals provided a number of examples of helpful ways in which services can be delivered to this client group. The key messages were:

- keep it simple
- provide it in a 'safe', comfortable environment
- make it easily and widely accessible
- make it free to the user

For their part, the young people attending the groups also provided an indication of the types of services which they found appealing and easy to use. It should be noted here that young NEETs (as with any other group) have diverse tastes and preferences. The examples provided here were described as helpful, easy to use and interesting by some of those attending the groups. Examples of services that 'work' for NEETs are provided in Figure 5.

### Figure 5: Examples of 'What works' in delivering services to NEETs

#### Examples from professionals included:

**Touchscreen computers** installed by **Connexions** in care homes for looked after children: enabling simple, easy online job search in settings where young people feel most comfortable. This helps to overcome the barrier of going elsewhere to 'have a look'. Easily accessible technology via touchscreen system.

**Notschool.net:** provision of home-based learning, laptop, connectivity, and 24 hour support. This enables 'family learning' as others can also use the laptop, thereby providing further support for 're-engaging' with learning. System now also used by some local authorities, but professionals emphasise it is not universally appropriate. It should be used to help re-engage with learning in circumstances where other forms of social interaction are available (ie, to avoid exacerbating social isolation). May have slow connection speeds in rural areas, leading to frustrations among young people (possibly linked to further disengagement). (see further information in Case Study Section 12).

**One bell-ing:** For communication with the client group at no cost to the client. Client rings the provider and hangs up after one ring. Service provider checks who the caller was (via 1471) and rings the client back.

#### Examples from young people included:

**JobCentre Plus:** provides a Personal Advisor (so you can ask questions), local and free access to Internet for jobs and other needs (such as accommodation search), free texting of jobs information to clients.

**MSN messaging service:** easy to use, can send messages faster than texting and it's free!

**BBC Bitesize:** online learning provision – 'all the colours stick in your head', you can read a little, practice a little, learn about whatever you want. Another example of a useful, appealing, staged approach to re-engagement with learning in a safe environment.

# Section 11

## When is the best time to help NEETs?

The old adage of ‘prevention being better than cure’ seems to hold good here. With such clear predictors of the likelihood of a young person becoming NEET (as described in section 5 above) and the overwhelming influence within those factors of educational underachievement, the importance of ensuring that all children achieve their potential for literacy and numeracy before leaving primary education, particularly children considered ‘at risk’, is paramount. Issues of challenging behaviour and truancy may also need to be addressed here for some children, and whenever a child moves schools, information about any of these factors needs to be brought to the attention of staff in the receiving school.

As the child moves through teen years, those with persistent truancy, challenging behaviour or low achievement coupled with other factors will be targeted by Connexions at age 14, but the work in Swindon<sup>33</sup>, suggests that earlier intervention may be needed. Equally those excluded from school, should perhaps all have the opportunity of support and intervention that occupies them for the same number of hours per week as their peers in school, albeit in ways that are more closely tailored to their individual needs. The Swindon Study, cited above at reference 11, contains in appendices, a 16 point action plan framework for early intervention and prevention, and a simple checklist which organisations can use to see which areas they need to take action on.

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF)<sup>34</sup>, introduced under Every Child Matters, is starting to identify children and young people with additional needs and meet these at the earliest opportunity. The CAF process involves bringing together a multi-agency team around the child creating a personalised action plan and delivering it. This is done in partnership with the family and provides a vehicle for early intervention work to enable local partnerships to address the issues highlighted in these profiles. By engaging with the child through early intervention there is potential to reduce their likelihood of becoming NEET at an earlier age than has often been the case.

A key life event for almost all young people is at age 16, when they must choose the next step after GCSE exam results. That time is the end of a 2-year period of study leading up to state exams, and often those young people who can see that they are not on the road to academic success, will stop ‘trying’ in Year 10 at school or even earlier. However, the time following the exam results and the start of the school and college years is a key time for intervention by Connexions and other support agencies to try and prevent a young person whose choices have been limited by poor results, from becoming NEET. This annual

<sup>33</sup> [www.swslim.org.uk/research/database/searchresults\\_detail\\_page.asp?ResearchID=2569](http://www.swslim.org.uk/research/database/searchresults_detail_page.asp?ResearchID=2569)

<sup>34</sup> [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00063/](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00063/)

cycle is repeated successively at 17, when there is a transition time for those who took up a one year course or have dropped out of a two year post-GCSE course, and finally after the A-level results at 18. At age 16, all young people have a guaranteed place on an appropriate course or placement in the September following their GCSEs. From April 2008, this 'September Guarantee' has also been extended to young people at 17+.

For young people in care, who already have much lower average attainment at age 16 than the general population of young people<sup>35</sup>, the time following transition from care to independent living at 16, or later at 18 for some (a higher proportion are likely to stay in care to 18 following the passage of the Children and Young Peoples Bill) can also be a time of great stress, with a possibility of becoming NEET, homeless or involved with the youth justice system. The stress of this period can also be exacerbated for any young person who has already experienced mental health difficulties – and it has been demonstrated that young people from lower socio-economic groups have a greater likelihood of such difficulties, which can again be a cause of becoming NEET.

The 'final' hurdle to independence is to settle a young person into productive employment. For young people who do not choose to continue in education at 16, or for those who drop out at any point post-16, the NEETs strategy contains new measures of support that are only just being introduced. New measures extending the range of courses available via Jobcentre Plus – (Foundation Learning Tier), fast-tracked entry to New Deal at age 18, provided that they have a history of being NEET. A new variant of the Activity Agreement, linked to financial support, is also being introduced. For the more vulnerable these are backed up by tailored packages of care provided by agencies working together to provide the 'targeted Youth Support' needed by each individual.

Instilling realism and achievability into the aspirations of young people is increasingly being seen as important. Research by NFER<sup>36</sup> for the Department for Education and Skills in 2006, indicated that school staff had concerns about young people's lack of realism when considering their future education, training or work options. Teaching staff made frequent references to the influence of the media, claiming that young people, particularly in Year 9 "*were motivated by money and glamour*". As one Head of Year opined:

*"TV influences them hugely, everything they watch does. They'll watch 'Bad Girls' and want to be a prison officer – it's even alright to be a footballer's wife now!" (p 56).*

Staff working with NEET and EET young people who contributed to the Swindon research cited at (11) above, also indicated the importance of supporting young people to make aspirational but realistic choices and stressed the importance of providing a comprehensive career education programme for all young people while they were still at school.

<sup>35</sup> SEU (2002), *A better education for children in care*

<sup>36</sup> DfES, *How do young people make choices at 14 and 16* (Research Report RR773) [www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR773.pdf](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR773.pdf)

The government has acknowledged the importance of information, advice and guidance for young people and, from April 2008, responsibility and funding for commissioning information, advice and guidance services for young people (defined as those aged 11 to 19 – or 24 in the case of those young adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities) will be devolved from the 47 Connexions partnerships to the 150 Local Authorities in England. To support the quality of this work the Department for Children, Schools and Families has produced Quality Standards for Young People's Information Advice and Guidance. Two of the standards (3 and 4) state that: 'Young people have the information they need to make well-informed and realistic decisions about learning and career options (and that) young people have the advice and guidance that they need to make well-informed and realistic decisions about learning and careers.'



## Section 12

# What is the Government doing?

### 12.1 Policies and legislation

The seminal Green Paper, *Every Child Matters*<sup>37</sup>, published in the wake of the Victoria Climbié enquiry, was followed by the Children Act 2004<sup>38</sup>, which established a Commissioner for Children, and placed a duty on local authorities and other key agencies to cooperate in delivering children's services. *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*, then set out a national framework for local change programmes to build services around the needs of children and young people, to maximise opportunity, and minimise risk.

The key piece of that period of legislation which reflects on the NEET group is the white paper, *Every Child Matters: 14-19 Education and Skills*, published in February 2005<sup>39</sup>. This sets out proposals for an education system focussed on high standards with a curriculum more tailored to the talents of individual young people and more flexibility of what and where to study. These include:

- Tackling low post-16 participation, increasing it at 17 from 75% to 90% over ten years.
- Ensure young people have a sound grounding in maths, English and skills needed for employment
- Providing better vocational routes, stretching all young people, and re-engaging with the disaffected.

The Implementation Plan, published later that year, set out the challenges of working together and a detailed timetable for action in all agencies over the next several years. Implementation of the first four of the new Diplomas is beginning in 2008.

It should be acknowledged, however, that the scale of the changes set in train by *Every Child Matters* (ECM) is so profound that they have not yet been fully realised in mid-2008. Whilst significant progress has been made in many areas of the ECM agenda – in many Local Authorities – there remain geographical and structural variations. The third joint Chief Inspectors Report<sup>40</sup> revealed that some statutory partners (including Connexions services and the Youth Offending Service) are still not involved in all Local Authorities. Such

<sup>37</sup> H M Treasury (2003), *Every Child Matters*

<sup>38</sup> DfES (2004), Children Act

<sup>39</sup> DfES (2005), *Every Child Matters 14-19 Education and Skills*, White Paper

<sup>40</sup> Safeguarding Children The third joint chief inspectors' report on arrangements to safeguard children [www.safeguardingchildren.org.uk/Safeguarding-Children/2008-report/Download-the-report](http://www.safeguardingchildren.org.uk/Safeguarding-Children/2008-report/Download-the-report)

a lengthy lead-in time to achieving the maturity of the new structures is understandable. Not only were the initial reforms immense but the landscape continues to evolve and the demands on Local Authorities accumulate.

The Leitch Report the following year<sup>41</sup> was a clarion call for action about the state of educational attainment, and lack of vocational training being a major threat to Britain's future as an economic power. Further initiatives on raising standards in education and skills have since included:

### **The Children's Plan, Building brighter futures, December 2007<sup>42</sup>**

Diplomas will be introduced and made a national entitlement by 2015, the first four being available in 2008. Work will be done with employers to offer more opportunities.

### **Raising Expectations: staying in education and training post-16, Green Paper March 2007<sup>43</sup>**

This paper notes that young people staying on will bring broader economic and social benefits. Increasing post-16 participation is a crucial part of increasing the skills level of the workforce and young people who remain in education are also less likely to commit crime or behave anti-socially.

It aims to get to 90 per cent participation in education or training among 17 year olds by 2015. To reach beyond this, the education and training system needs to engage people up to the age of 16 encouraging and preparing them to stay on, and make the correct provision available post 16 to keep them engaged and motivated.

The paper mentions the use of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) to provide a strong incentive for 16-19 year olds to stay in education. These have a proven track record in increasing participation within the targeted age group. The EMA provides an incentive of about £30 per week for young people who stay in education post 16 although there is no long term evidence that this is an effective measure.

### **Back on Track: A strategy for modernising alternative provision for young people, May 2008<sup>44</sup> (White Paper)**

This states that around 135,000 pupils a year spend time in non-school settings for a range of reasons – permanent exclusion, bad behaviours, special educational needs or challenging personal circumstances, and that whether they are in Pupil Referral Units, FE or the voluntary sector, achievement is poor. It shows the need to provide effective early intervention and alternative provision. Schools should be able to make use of alternative provision as an intervention for pupils at risk of exclusion. Those who are already excluded should get provision that will help prevent them from getting into more serious trouble later on.

<sup>41</sup> DCSF (2006), *Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills*

<sup>42</sup> DCSF (2007) *The Children's Plan, Building brighter futures*. DCSF

<sup>43</sup> DCSF (2007) *Raising Expectations: staying in education and training post-16*

<sup>44</sup> DCSF(2008), *Back on Track: A strategy for modernising alternative provision for young people*

It puts forward some core principles:

- Start from what works best with each individual
- Secure core educational entitlement for young people in alternative provision
- Better planning and commissioning of alternative provision
- Local authorities held to account for outcomes of the alternative provision they deliver or commission.

These initiatives are principally from the Department for Education and Skills (now the Department for Children, Schools and Families) and additions come from all the other government-funded agencies that have a responsibility for the well-being of young people, eg Connexions, the Learning and Skills Council, the Social Exclusion Unit, the Youth Justice Service and Jobcentre Plus. In 2008, more changes are happening or are presaged by the changes in the Connexions Service following the establishment of Children's Trusts in every principal local authority area, and the winding up of the Learning and Skills Council and its local offices by 2010. Jobcentre Plus is also changing its working methods and closing local offices in many market towns across the country, to rely much less on face-to-face services and much more on digital technologies for providing information.

The three year Departmental Public Service Agreements (PSAs) of October 2007, include PSA 14 'Increase the number of children and young people on the path to success'. Reduction in NEET young people is one of the indicators with the target being to reduce the numbers of NEET young people by two per cent between 2007 and 2010. This has added further pressure, if indeed more were needed, to tackle the issue of disengaged young people, and further measures are now going through Parliament.

The Education and Skills Bill, currently in Parliament, introduces a requirement to remain in education or training beyond the current statutory leaving age of 16. By 2013, all 17 year olds, and by 2015 all 18 year olds, must be participating in some form of education or training. The Secretary of State, Ed Balls, announced in November 2007 that it would include personalised learning opportunities for every young person, improved advice and guidance services, an expansion of the range of courses for which Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) will be paid and a 60 per cent increase in apprenticeship places. He also announced a specific £100m investment in organisations that work to support NEETs. The second round of this Youth Sector Development Fund will have preventing youth crime and re-offending as a key focus, but grants will be awarded to a wide variety of Third Sector organisations that provide an invaluable service to some of society's most vulnerable young people, helping them face difficult issues such as substance misuse, teenage pregnancy and not being in education, employment or training (NEET).

The **NEETs Strategy**<sup>45</sup> was published by DCSF in 2008, and has four key elements:

1. **careful tracking** – to identify early those young people who are NEET or at risk, and provide the intelligence to plan and commission appropriate services.
2. **personalised guidance and support** – to make sure young people know how to access education, training or employment and to enable them to overcome barriers
3. **provision of a full range of courses to meet demand**
4. the **rights and responsibilities** of young people to engage in work or learning.

Practical measures flowing from these elements include:

- Immediate entry onto New Deal on the 18<sup>th</sup> birthday if a young person has been NEET for at least 26 weeks immediately beforehand (with sanctions that could lead to benefits being lost if the individual does not prove that they are actively looking for work)
- Trialling an even greater extension of EMAs to cover third sector or other education/training provision commissioned by local authorities, and to the Entry to Employment courses
- Extending the ‘September Guarantee’ which currently offers a place in continuing education to all 16 year olds leaving school) to 17 year olds
- Enabling more young people to start programmes during the academic year, so that those who don’t begin in September, or who drop out, can be re-engaged more quickly
- Continuing Activity Agreements, which offer personalised learning, linked to financial support for the hardest to reach young people.

DCSF has issued detailed guidance<sup>46</sup> to Jobcentre Plus and Connexions on how best to work together to implement this strategy.

The 14-19 Reform Programme, which includes an expansion of apprenticeship and the introduction of the Diploma which will mix academic and applied learning, qualification reforms, and the transfer of responsibility for post-16 learning from the LSC to local authorities, is also hoped to drive progress on NEETs targets.

<sup>45</sup> DCSF, *Reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)*

<sup>46</sup> DCSF (2008), *Reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET): Guidance for Jobcentre Plus, local authorities and Connexions providers on working together to support young people NEET in their area*

*Aiming High for Young People*<sup>47</sup>, the last strand of the Policy Review of children and Young People, proposed investment in services and opportunities to give all young people the chances to be involved in activities that help develop them as resilient individuals, avoiding risky behaviours, and addressing the negative perceptions held by the rest of society about young people in general.

Taking forward the *Every Child Matters* agendas for teenagers, is essentially trying to integrate all youth support services helping young people to achieve the five Every Child Matters Outcomes through the coherent, young person-centred delivery of information, advice and guidance, support, development opportunities and positive activities. 'Targeted Youth Support' (TYS) began in 14 pathfinder areas in 2006 and should be in place in all local authority areas by 2008.

A final piece of the jigsaw of legislation and initiatives that affect young people who are NEET is currently before Parliament<sup>48</sup>. The Children and Young Persons Bill is a preventative measure, aiming to strengthen the support systems for looked-after children and young people, with a presumption that all young people will stay in care until they reach 18 years. It strengthens the 'corporate parent' role of local authorities, and puts a 'designated teacher' for each looked-after young person on a statutory footing, where it is now voluntary.

## 12.2 Targets and measures

Government targets for the groups are structured around Public Service Agreements (PSAs) and Departmental Strategic Objectives (DSO). These high-level objectives steer local government targets through the system of Local Area Agreements (LAAs).

The key target for NEETs is PSA 14 'Increase the number of children and young people on the path to success'. Reduction in NEET young people is one of the indicators, with the target being to reduce the numbers of NEET young people by two per cent between 2007 and 2010. Monitoring information will be required not only about participation in EET, but also about participation in positive activities, drug and alcohol misuse, and the under-18 conception rate, with a target there to reduce it by 50 per cent by 2010. There is also a related target to reduce the number of first-time entrants to the Criminal Justice System aged 10-17, which relates closely to NEETs reduction.

Young people who are NEET have also appeared directly in the list of 198 LAA Indicators, against which the performance of local authorities and their delivery partners will be measured from 2008-2011. Local authority partnerships have been asked to select 35 of the indicators as their key priorities, and their choices have recently been released to a website<sup>49</sup> set up by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

<sup>47</sup> HM Treasury & DCSF (July 2007), *Aiming High for Young People: a ten year strategy for positive activities*

<sup>48</sup> DCSF (2007), *Children and Young Person's Bill*

<sup>49</sup> [www.localpriorities.communities.gov.uk](http://www.localpriorities.communities.gov.uk)

An accompanying news story<sup>50</sup> has aggregated the figures nationally and the top 20 choices from the list of the 198 indicators are given below.

Top 20 priorities across England:	
Name of priority	Number of local areas choosing priority (out of 150)
16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)	115
Under 18 conception rate	106
Net additional homes provided	104
Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)	102
Per capita reduction in CO2 emissions in the LA area	100
Obesity among primary school age children in Year 6	99
Serious acquisitive crime rate	98
Proportion of population aged 19-64 for males and 19-59 for females qualified to at least Level 2 or higher	95
Stopping smoking	89
Percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area	87
All-age all cause mortality rate	86
Percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality	85
Re-offending rate of prolific and other priority offenders	83
Assault with injury crime rate	82
Social Care clients receiving Self Directed Support per 100,000 population	81
Adult participation in sport and active recreation	80
Carers receiving needs assessment or review and a specific carer's service, or advice and information	80
Young people's participation in positive activities	77
New business registration rate	76
Repeat incidents of domestic violence	75

<sup>50</sup> [www.publictechnology.net/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=16424](http://www.publictechnology.net/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=16424)

The significance given to NEETs reduction could not be clearer from this table, where the top priority, chosen by 115 authorities out of the 150 total, is all about NEETs, and the second highest chosen by 106 authorities, is the largest single predictor of NEET status for females. Furthermore, number 18 on the list is about participation of young people in positive activities.

Further details on all 198 LAAs and their relation to PSAs and DSOs can be found in the spreadsheet *Targets and Measures*. This document summarises the relevance of each target to the group and collects further information, where available, on the rational behind the indicator, its precise definition, what data is collected and by whom.

# Section 13

## Case studies

### 13.1 Getting the systems right!

With local authorities now being measured on their success at NEETs reduction, some have invested significantly in IT systems to help themselves and partners work together across organisational or institutional boundaries. In Greater London, all 32 Boroughs and the City have come together for that type of initiative – one that has been operational for longer, is in York – the YorOK database. The material below is available from the DCFS website.

#### YorOK Database

“Information sharing is a cornerstone of effective multi-agency working. Our database, YorOK, is helping us develop a truly integrated youth service in York. It’s getting services to talk and work together that, before, had no contact to speak of” – Steve Flatley, Connexions local manager, York, December 2007

Challenges:

- Ensuring services input into and use the information sharing database
- Concerns about the security of information sharing and suspicion from families about its purpose
- Developing lead professionals and ensuring they are well supported and coordinated
- The upcoming merger of youth services and Connexions and the coming together of locality teams

Key Actions:

- York chosen as Children’s Trust (CT) pathfinder
- CT organises training across the authority on YorOk, the local version of **Contact Point** (2005)
- York becomes targeted youth support (TYS) pathfinder. YorOk is important to TYS multi-agency working
- York is one of first councils to publish a children and young people’s plan, includes YorOK
- YorOK board set up (children and young people’s strategic board) – meets every six weeks



- CAF is piloted with a children's centre and in York West
- Connexions and CT set up an integrated-service one-stop-shop in central York for young people
- TYS rolled-out across all three localities in the borough
- Three TYS work groups formed to identify lead professionals to coordinate support and activities for young people
- Lead professional piloted with disabled young people
- Next steps, the roll-out of CAF and the merger of Connexions and the Youth Service, tackling young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

#### Key Implementation Tips:

- Take time to ensure young people and their families appreciate that sharing information is empowering
- Develop effective strategies to secure informed consent – from families or young people (14 years +)
- Professionals need a shared understanding of language and thresholds. The CAF provides this.
- Make sure service staff always record information on the database. If they don't do this it doesn't work
- If an agency carries out a CAF it should then lead with the young people
- Information sharing may have workload and capacity implications for frontline workers – plan for this
- Provide ongoing training
- Ensure all agencies and organisations, including the Voluntary and Community Sector, are involved in information sharing

#### Impact:

YorOK has helped improve multi-agency working in York which has, among other benefits, helped inform and drive the development of the one-stop-shop and five children's centres. The improvement in integrated working is already having an impact, with **NEET figures for young people going down from 5.4 per cent last year to 3.9 per cent this.**

Part of the reason for this is a greater willingness for agency staff to carry out home visits as, due to improved information sharing and collaboration, agencies are more aware of how they can support each other and help each other hit targets with the aim of improving outcomes for young people. Connexions and the Youth Service are integrating particularly well into a coordinated team.

**York's aim is to reduce its NEET figures for young people to zero.** A NEET strategy group has recently been set up to work on this challenge. Other challenges include developing the lead professional role and rolling-out the CAF across the whole borough. This is vital to ensure the common language and thresholds necessary for effective information sharing.

## 13.2 Investing in mobile learning – MoleNet Projects

£7.2m initiative has been funded by contributions from both the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and participating institutions. The Mobile Learning Network (MoLeNet), managed by the Learning and Skills Network was launched in early 2008, and brings together 32 providers, mainly FE Colleges, some working with other partners.

MoLeNET aims to develop the wider use of Mobile Learning across the FE sector and to address national LSC objectives and local priorities. The projects are being supported by MoLeNET's Support and Evaluation Programme which includes: training, advice and guidance from expert mentors; some central procurement and re-purposing of learning materials and tools; an on-line environment for peer-to-peer support and knowledge sharing; training and support for practitioner led action research projects; and evaluation.

A wide range of mobile and handheld devices are to be used: from mobile phones through PDAs, iPods, handheld games machines (PSPs and Nintendo DS) to Ultra-Mobile PCs (UMPCs). These are to be employed in an impressive range of learning opportunities, several of which target young people who are NEET.

Further details for two projects are given below

### 13.2.1 Lowestoft College

#### ***“Widening participation Through Mobile Learning”***

To investigate the use of mobile technology to widen participation, increase accessibility, and improve retention and achievement of under-represented groups and to improve the learner experience.

Through this we hope to achieve better retention, increased achievement in the target groups. Data for 2008 should show an increase in the enrolments of these under-represented groups in education and training.

Economic and social exclusion is a major problem in the Waveney area as is low educational attainment and inadequate transport facilities. This project will target ‘Skills for Life’ in order to build confidence and encourage users to improve their basic skills and progress onto longer programmes. Users will be encouraged to work both in groups and individually. As well as learning to use mobile technology as a learning aid users will improve their communication skills.

This project will help to break down some of the main barriers which stop the target groups entering learning and staying the course, like low income, lack of social skills and confidence, initial low levels of literacy and numeracy and location and timing of education and training. The project will tackle this by focusing on key skills, personalising the learning experience, providing mobile devices at no cost, enabling and encouraging self study, but with high levels of support and guidance and relating outputs to areas of interest to students.

### **13.2.2 Regent and Gateway Colleges, Leicester**

#### ***“Improved Learner engagement for 14-16 year olds in the foundation tier and NEET groups using mobile technology”***

Foundation tier learners and NEET learners in both colleges have limited access to good learning opportunities through ILT and yet these learners are the most likely to benefit from increased personalisation of learning. The bid offers the opportunity for both colleges to pilot the use of mobile devices to improve learner engagement and learner tracking. The funds will enable the colleges to improve their infrastructure and to buy and trial devices which can deliver more engaging learning materials to these learners within and without the classroom lesson. In addition the bid will provide the drive for the colleges to collaborate further and in particular to train staff and develop their experience in using these devices. We hope to establish some improvement in attendance, retention, achievement and enjoyment for these learners.

Learners will have a greater opportunity to benefit from the use of ILT within and without the class room. In particular the devices offer the opportunity for better delivery of personalised learning, students working in groups on an activity and for using the devices for recording their work and developing a type of e-portfolio. It should be done now as the technology is becoming more stable and also because the learners are well versed in the use of technology; it is staff that may need to become more familiar with its use and pedagogy. Gateway and Regent have developed strong partnership methods of working and now is an excellent time to build on this. The implications of not doing this are as follows

- a lost partnership working opportunity
- a lost opportunity to develop this type of work with our nearly developing NEET groups
- lost collaborative CPD opportunities
- a lost opportunity to develop skills in delivering personalised learning through mobile devices
- a lost opportunity to improve access to ILT for these learners
- a missed opportunity to benefit from the wider workings of the project

#### **Target Audience:**

The 14 – 19 NEET/late starter group (30 learners). The 14 – 19 entry level groups (80 learners). The 14 – 19 level 1 group (140 learners).

## 13.3 Reaching out to disadvantaged young people

**FreqOUT!** is *Vital Regeneration's* innovative London based community education programme for young people which originated in Westminster. It explores the artistic and educational potential of wireless technology to engage socially excluded young people living in the 20 per cent most deprived areas of the UK.

Experienced artists, tutors and youth workers facilitate activities that encourage young people to discuss and create responses to current issues and technologies.

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES



We aim to increase young people's opportunities for work and further education through involvement with pioneering technology, exposure to artists, members of the business community and statutory service providers.

The **FreqOUT!** vision is to push the boundaries of emergent technologies in order to...

- Establish learning and enterprise opportunities for young people
- Break down barriers between industry, communities and the arts
- Improve social cohesion and quality of life
- Explore new possibilities for the arts
- Consult meaningfully with young people
- Innovate public service delivery

*Vital Regeneration* manages FreqOUT! on behalf of an innovative consortium made up of City of Westminster Council, including their ALMO, City West Homes and the Westminster Youth Service; independent artists; private companies including Capgemini, Vertex; the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) and voluntary sector partners. It is funded by City of Westminster council, the Arts Council, Capgemini, Vertex, the John Lyons Charity and by commissioning agencies such as North Fulham NDC, the Hayward Gallery, London Development Agency and Paddington Development Trust.

One of FreqOUT's projects helps young people discuss topics relevant to them and make a film about it using handheld devices.

### **CCTV Is Following Me**

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Young people learnt about digital CCTV technology and debated the issues around privacy and public safety. With the help of an artist and a film maker and using a camera mounted in the ceiling of their youth club controlled by hand devices they created a five minute film which took an amusing perspective on the issues involved.

## 13.4 Handing over editorial control

### **Lyrical Magazine: A voice for Sheffield Care Leavers**

“Young people leaving care are one of the groups that is at a higher risk of not being in education, employment or training (NEET)” (DfES 2008).

The setting up and publishing of Lyrical Magazine aimed to give a voice to a group of Care Leavers, some of whom had experienced disrupted, insecure, transient childhoods and a history of problems at school. Care Leavers in Sheffield had expressed their frustration that the images used for publicity aimed at them were never ‘of them’ or chosen ‘by them’.

For Lyrical Magazine the young people set their own agenda, identified the themes they wanted to pursue and the design and production values. Lyrical took as its template the well established Cube Magazine and Media project which had been developed by Sheffield South CLC as a work-experience offer for students from 25 Sheffield secondary schools. The project brought together a very diverse group of young people in terms of ability ranges, social backgrounds, current circumstances and educational needs. The group was supported by a variety of professionals from across the range of those involved in the role of the corporate parent and from the wider education constituency.

Digital skills training for staff was also opened up to other workers from across the range of support services. The young people met on a voluntary basis once or twice weekly during evenings to hold editorial discussions or carry out their research. On other occasions they went out onto the streets of Sheffield to interview members of the public or go on a ghost walk. A variety of everyday digital technologies (such as digital cameras, MP3 recorders, PCs, Macs) were used to research, collect and capture, design, edit and present the articles.

### **Observations**

- The young people were clearly motivated by having editorial control and were producing something they ‘owned’ rather than a corporate ‘house’ magazine.
- The power of audience was another key motivational factor – the young people were constantly and acutely aware that this would be seen. It was particularly important to them that ex-school colleagues, past and present peers and teachers would see what they had achieved.
- Some of the young people had previously struggled in group situations (some were on the Autistic Spectrum) but settled to make significant contributions to the project.
- One young woman described the experience as being like “a family”.
- The support workers and professionals who worked on the project also reported increased morale – they too looked forward to the sessions.

- There was a high degree of very effective multi-agency working amongst those working with the young people – the variety of backgrounds and skills they brought to the project contributed significantly to the stability of the project and the high quality output.
- High support ratios (close to one-to-one) also contributed to the project's success.
- The high quality equipment contributed to motivation and the high quality output.
- Increased confidence and self-esteem amongst the young people – culminating in their willingness to speak publicly to an audience of over 50 at the official launch of Lyrical.
- Improvement in literacy skills – most demonstrable amongst those who had low levels at the project outset.
- Improved digital skills and digital confidence amongst the young people and the support workers.
- At least three of the young people have now applied for and secured places at The Sheffield College (a very experienced teacher who was not part of this project said of one in particular "I have no doubt that this has been a life-changing experience for [x]").
- The young people have all been provided with work references by the media expert who worked on the project.
- The young people are fully expected to gain two modules of an ASDAN qualification for their work on Lyrical.
- There was a high degree of multi-agency working from across the various services involved in fulfilling the role of corporate parent and more broadly looking after vulnerable young people.

## Conclusions

Lyrical magazine has possibly proved even more of a success than was initially anticipated. The level of engagement amongst the young people was clearly evidenced through the frequency of their attendance at, and contribution to, the evening sessions. These sessions were wholly voluntary and coincided with exam periods and added distractions (one young person had their accommodation burgled and vandalised) yet regularly overran and had to be brought to a close by the support workers. Control of the agenda and publication for an audience have been powerful complementary motivational factors.

Support from media professionals and the use of high quality digital equipment are the other positive aspects which go beyond the typical Care Leaver Experience. However, these could only be fully exploited with the dedicated support of the small team of caring professionals who were ever-present through the project providing the necessary stability and understanding.

This is an exemplar for multi-agency working which can inform the ongoing development of Children and Young People's Services in Sheffield and beyond.

Allowing the young people to write about and discuss what is important to them provided poignant insights into their own lives. At a discussion about why there should be an article focusing on tattoos one young woman said "...because they stay with you for life".

The willingness of the editorial team to speak at the official launch of Lyrical (where the audience of over 50 included other Care Leavers, Heads of Service and Local Authority Directors, parents and guardians) was powerful evidence of the increased confidence. It was particularly profound when some of the young people commented that without this project they would never have spoken publicly and the Lyrical experience had broadened their horizons for further education and career routes.

## 13.5 Out of school provision IT-style – a route to prevention of NEET status

Running since 2000, Notschool.net, which is a major part of the work of the Inclusion Trust, a national charity based in Essex, is an online learning community, offering an alternative to traditional education, to young people who, for a variety of reasons, can no longer cope with school, or with alternatives such as home-tutoring or special referral units. Young people, referred to as researchers, are equipped with IT equipment and an internet connection in their homes, and are supported by the core team from Notschool.net, by a Local Authority team, personal mentors, a number of subject experts, and virtual 'buddies'. They become members of an online community. Progress is accredited within the National Framework.

Funded by local authorities, around 700 researchers join the programme each year, coming from many of England's areas of greatest social deprivation. An evaluation of the 2004-05 cohort found that as well as noticeable increases in skills and self-esteem:

- 50% moved into further education
- 26% entered college-related employment
- 18% entered fulltime work

Local authorities must commit to supporting the model at high level for it to work. A few local authorities are developing similar forms of provision, where they are attempting to integrate it with more traditional forms of provision, to allow the young person to move back into mainstream institutions before 16 if they are ready.



## 13.6 Virtual Ruksak – early stages of an innovative project

### 1. Background

The project emerged through initial discussion between Digital Birmingham & St Basils Trust (for homeless young people) in 2007. Subsequently it formed the subject of an entry to Microsoft's DesignIT 2008 competition, and won a prize of £15,000, invested in its further development. Connexions, Birmingham City Council (Housing) and Jobcentre Plus are also partners.

### 2. What is Virtual Ruksak?

It is envisaged as an on-line secure facility which enables anyone who hasn't got a fixed address, or is prone to losing their vital details, a permanent and safe place to keep them – like having a safe draw at home for your N.I. number, driving licence, birth certificate, previous addresses, medical card, etc. Whilst further discussion with stakeholder agencies needs to take place, it is anticipated that in the future, Virtual Ruksak (VR) users will be able to use documents stored electronically (in their VR) as part of the application process for benefits, housing, employment, etc. Potential VR users have confirmed that this secure data storage aspect of the project will be of real benefit.

### 3. How will it work?

A person will be issued with a Virtual Ruksak when engaging with a recognised participating agency such as St Basils or Birmingham City Council. The Ruksak is his/hers for life and only the user has access to it. Contact between VR holders and participating agencies via the Ruksak (eg by email) will only take place at the users behest. It is important that the user recognises the Ruksak as something that he/she controls – in order that it becomes something that is genuinely useful.

### 4. Who is it for?

In the first instance, the project will be trialled on 30 – 40 homeless 16 – 25 year olds who are clients of St Basils. The results of this initial pilot will be reviewed (and the service amended accordingly) before consideration will be given to extending the scheme to further users. Beyond the pilot, there are a number of user groups for whom a Virtual Ruksak might be useful, including:

- Homeless people of all ages
- People who are in danger of becoming homeless
- Migrants
- Refugees & asylum seekers
- People who have suffered abuse
- Ex-offenders

Discussion is currently taking place with Shropshire County Council to extend the project to include Prolific & other Priority Offenders (PPO's).

## 5. Specification – secure data storage

The Virtual Ruksak is essentially data storage space – accessible online – which will be structured as follows to assist users. Types of documents it would hold could include:

Personal records:

- NI number
- Copy of Birth Certificate
- Copy of driving licence/driving licence details
- Address book: contact details of family & friends
- Copy of passport/passport number
- Passwords

Employment & Education:

- CV builder – a tool to enable users to produce a CV relevant for every job application
- Covering letter for job applications
- Evidence of job search activities – eg registration with online recruitment sites
- NI number
- Qualifications/school records/record of achievement/etc.
- School/college work
- References

Housing history:

- Current & previous addresses
- Copies of bills – gas, electricity, water, telephone, TV licence, etc

Medical records:

- Current and previous doctors details
- Copy of medical card

## **6. Communications**

Some form of communication will be necessary to enable agencies to use the VR to contact clients. To meet this requirement, it would need to include email and text as a minimum. The tools suggested by stakeholders & potential users so far include calendar, address book, personal diary, messaging, email, message board & text.

## **7. Evaluation**

A pilot review will take place after the project has been live for 3 months. Microsoft should provide usage statistics – pages accessed, etc. In addition, some qualitative feedback from VR holders will be sought. (On the home page there should be a message alerting users that they may be contacted for feedback). The results of the pilot review could form the basis of a dissemination event for promoting the project to new user groups. It is envisaged that this would take place in December 2008 and be organised by Digital Birmingham.

# Section 14

## Pointers for the future

The above sections give detailed information on various themes that allow us to gain a better understanding of the group. Here we capture pertinent messages that cut across many of the above sections. These are drawn out from the desk-based and primary research as well as expert opinion given at the validation workshop. We also capture here suggestions for the future.

### ICT Infrastructure and Training

- Lack of universal access to Broadband was seen as an important barrier, coupled with the costs of access. Universal access in Finland, subsidised by Nokia, was given as an example of how this has been achieved elsewhere.
- The possibility of reductions in funding for existing services providing public access to ICT facilities plus training and support for users (such as UK Online Centres) was seen as very counter-productive. The continued provision of these 'neutral' locations, with the ability to help users when they needed it, was seen as very significant for people who had had negative educational experiences in the past, and would therefore not use libraries.

### Suggestions for Service Provision

- Provide **'holistic' services** addressing a range of client needs – avoid the 'silo' mentality focusing on single issues for clients with multiple needs.
- **Use digital technologies creatively** to engage young people in areas of interest e.g. producing their own online blog to help with literacy, or designing a website on an issue of interest to them (developing ICT and Internet search skills).
- Provide **opportunities for peer support and mentoring/role models**
- Using online 'social networking' opportunities among young people in the client group or with others previously NEET, to encourage peer support, and engage volunteers who were previously NEET to mentor young people who are currently NEET.
- Ensure **good support** is in place to provide the help young people need to engage effectively with learning via ICT (examples to avoid are under-staffed 'drop in centres' which encouraged people to 'drop out' because of limited support available).
- Provide a variety of **free access to ICT** (computers and Internet) to encourage its general and regular use, in **places where young people go already** (eg pubs, youth clubs, care homes, foyers, helping organisations).

### **Short-Term Initiative Fatigue**

There was general agreement that there had been too many, short-term, one-off, siloed funding initiatives for working with NEETs, aimed at both statutory and third sectors. This had made follow-through on longer term projects difficult, and resulted in waste of public funds, frustration that good services could not continue and be offered more widely, loss of momentum, morale and staff in service providers. Because the evidence points to effective interventions with young people who are disengaged and at risk needing to be provided by a trusted intermediary over an extended period of time, the investment of stable funding over longer periods is needed to enable better and sustained outcomes for the young people and for society as a whole.

## Section 15

### Want to know more about NEETs?

Each Children's Trust, which have been established across English counties, cities and unitary authorities, will have a variety of multi-agency partnership structures bringing together all the key local agencies for working with disadvantaged young people, and should be the first port of call for information at a more local level.

The list of organisations below directs readers to websites from which further information can be obtained relevant to the NEETs group. Alongside each organisation and web address, a short description of the organisation and the types of information one could expect to find is given.

#### NEETS – Key Organisations Providing Support

Name	Contact	What They Do
<b>Statutory Organisations</b>		
<b>Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)</b>	Rt Hon Ed Balls MP, Secretary of State, Sanctuary Buildings Great Smith Street London SW1P 3BT Tel: 0870 000 2288	National responsibility for children, families, schools, 14-19 issues and the Respect Task Force.
<b>Connexions and Connexions Direct</b>	<a href="http://www.connexions-direct.com/index.cfm?pid=72">www.connexions-direct.com/index.cfm?pid=72</a>	Connexions Services for young people 13-25 are delivered through many local partnerships; Connexions Direct is a web-based information service for young people.
<b>Third Sector Organisations</b>		
<b>YouthNet</b>	First Floor, 50 Featherstone Street, London EC1Y 8RT Tel: 020 7250 5700	YouthNet is the UK's first exclusively online charity. It guides and supports young people, with a variety of services, enabling them to make educated life choices, participate in society and achieve their ambitions.

Name	Contact	What They Do
<b>Rathbone</b>	Dr Richard Williams, Chief Executive 4th Floor Churchgate House 56 Oxford Street Manchester M1 6EU Tel: 0161 236 5358	Runs a variety of programmes for disadvantaged young people one of which 'Youth Engagement' is specifically targeted at NEET young people.
<b>Barnardo's</b>	Martin Narey, Chief Executive, Tanners Lane Barkingside Ilford Essex IG6 1QG Tel: 020 8550 8822	Services include counselling, fostering and adoption, vocational training and disability inclusion groups. Some specific projects for NEET young people.
<b>Fairbridge</b>	Andrew Purvis, Chief Executive, 207 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8XD Tel: 020 7928 1704 Fax: 020 7928 6016	Based in 15 of the most disadvantaged areas in England, Scotland and Wales, Fairbridge supports young people aged 13-25 who are not in education, employment or training – giving them the motivation, confidence and skills they need to change their lives.
<b>The Inclusion Trust</b>	Jean Johnson, Chief Executive Unit 2-3 Stansted Courtyard Parsonage Road Takeley Essex CM22 6PU Tel: 01279 87 30 30	Runs Notschool.net, a national online learning community, aimed at young people 14-16 who are not in any other education provision, with the aim of preventing them becoming NEET at 16.
<b>Princes Trust</b>	Martina Milburn, Chief Executive 18 Park Square East London NW1 4LH Tel: 020 7543 1234	Projects, programmes and grants for local initiatives run by young people. Special programmes for care leavers and ex-offenders. Wider work covers 16-30 age range.

Name	Contact	What They Do
<b>YMCA</b>	Rosi Prescott, Chief Executive, YMCA England 640 Forest Road London E17 3DZ	The YMCA is a leading Christian charity committed to supporting all young people, particularly in times of need. It provides hostels, training and many other types of intervention.
<b>Tomorrow's People</b>	Debbie Scott, Chief Executive, 4th Floor, Rothermere House, 49/51 Cambridge Road, Hastings East Sussex TN34 1DT Tel: 01424 718491	Help break the cycle of unemployment so that people can take positive control of their lives and build a brighter future. They also save employers time and money by finding them the right people for the right jobs.
<b>The Foyer Federation</b>	Jane Slowey, Chief Executive 3rd Floor, 5-9 Hatton Wall London EC1N 8HX Tel: 020 7430 2212	The national network of foyers. All young people need a home, support and a springboard into independent living, learning and work. Some don't get it. Foyers fill the gap.
<b>Private Sector Companies</b>		
<b>Clearaims Ltd</b>	Clearaims Limited The i-zone The University of Bolton Deane Road Bolton BL3 5AB Tel: 01204 595854	The Clearaims Programme targeted at 16-18 builds confidence, self-belief and motivation, allowing individuals to be inspired and to develop their own ambitions and aspirations.



