

Making a Difference in the Lives of Young People: 2009

SUMMARY OF ISSUES FOR PARTNERS TO CONSIDER WHICH ARISE FROM 2009 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF DATA COLLECTED BY CONNEXIONS NORTHUMBERLAND

Set within the context of the Northumberland Whatever it Takes Strategy the Making a Difference in the Lives of Young People report contains a short statement of key points at the end of each section.

This summary attempts to distil those statements to highlight some critical issues and messages for partners to consider in order to impact further upon preventing young people aged 16-18 from becoming Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) and on helping those young people who have become NEET to re-engage more quickly and successfully.

The achievement of 7.3% NEET for the county in 2009/2010 was significant but our goal is to better the outcome for all young people by narrowing the gap between the best and worst performing areas. The Making a Difference Supplementary Report provides some locality information that might assist planning in specific parts of the county.

1. NEET Reduction

1.1 Situation Unknown: Effective opportunity and support planning depends upon knowing the current status of all 16-18 year olds. Partners can contribute to ensuring that Connexions knowledge and contact with young people is as up to date as possible. Sharing information with the Connexions delivery team will contribute to the value of reports such as this as well as contributing to our deployment of resource to those young people who most need it.

We need to build further on existing joint working with Jobcentre Plus to find effective local/regional solutions.

1.2 NEET Available and Unavailable: To make a bigger difference in the lives of young people who are available to take up an opportunity and those who for a variety of reasons are not yet ready, partners need to:

- maintain the quality, quantity and diverse and flexible range of support to enable even greater focus on the hardest to help young people.
- identify and action ways to better address barriers to engagement post 16 through proactive multi-agency partnership work. Examples include work with Looked After young people to improve information sharing; earlier identification of learners in need of support resulting in better retention of students on full time college, school and training provider courses.
- find new and a greater number of ways to convert good learning to meet the DCSF 'In Learning' definitions eg Teenage Mums.
- focus on supporting those young people who are aged 17 years and over and those with special and additional needs.
- develop route ways of seamless support to better enable young people successfully completing health related treatments in their transitions to education, employment and training.

- consider providing an increasing range of **start dates for courses** especially with start dates in January and at Easter. This would help all groups of young people who are NEET.
- Improve joint sharing arrangements with Jobcentre Plus to enable improved prevention of unemployment and smooth transition where required to adult services.

1.3 Long Term NEET: Each year there is a small increase in the number of young people sliding into long term disengagement. There is a continued need for partners to explore ways to help prevent the duration of NEET from increasing at 17 and 18.

2. Prevention of NEET

2.1 Seamless Transition between opportunities:

- In 2009 although fewer Year 11 students became NEET immediately on leaving school, 4.1% compared with 4.8% in 2008, our goal must be to find ways to reduce this percentage to zero in every school. Strengthening partner contribution to meeting the Government's **September Guarantee** is essential if every young person is truly to have the offer of a suitable post 16 learning place.
- Providers of education, training and volunteering opportunities can make the greater reduction to NEET by supporting **seamless progression** for young people from one form of engagement or learning to another. This should be the case for both completers and young people wishing to move provision.

2.2 NEET Joiners: Although there has been an increase in the numbers of young people joining NEET from education fewer than in 2008 joined NEET at age 16. Personal Advisers working with partners has continued action to improve prevention activities and information sharing.

To achieve further progress:

- partners may wish to consider setting and monitoring agreed local targets to further reduce both first time entry to NEET and the duration of times a young person becomes NEET.
- all opportunity providers can make a difference to NEET by letting their local Connexions Centre know as early and as quickly as possible when a young person is struggling and at risk of leaving the establishment in line with the September Guarantee requirements.
- early action by partners to identify the trigger points that drive young people to become NEET followed by immediate and appropriate support and preparation of those young people for their next steps can have a significant impact.

3. Work based provision:

3.1 Employer engagement: is essential to ensure the creation and inclusion of more flexible opportunities to meet the needs of young people for whom this route way is a preference and to meet both regeneration and new Diploma requirements.

Co-ordination of support for employers will help maximise their engagement in support to young people pre and post 16.

3.2 Employers: can make a difference to NEET by letting their local Connexions Centre know as early and as quickly as possible when they have an opportunity and when they decide to let go a 16-18 year old.

3.3 Apprenticeships – Young People Aged 16-20: There has been limited research to identify from what learning/activity and at what age a young person progressed into an employed apprenticeship. Advertised apprenticeships seem few in Northumberland so indirect progression via conversion from Programme Led Apprenticeships or other forms of work based learning may be a primary route way.

- Further research will assist improved information advice and guidance for young people.
- Building the new partnership, information exchange and employer contact arrangements with National Apprenticeship Service will contribute to improved opportunities for Northumberland young people.

3.4 Employment without training: Jobs without Government endorsed training provide significant opportunities for young people in Northumberland.

There is a continued need to build links with employers and employer engagement to provide appropriate progression routes for these young people with recognised training and qualifications.

What action can we identify to:

- incorporate opportunities for accredited learning in employment opportunities?
- convert short term employment opportunities into sustainable employment?
- enhance partnership links/liaison with employers to promote a learning culture?
- Convert 'locally recognised' training eg national retailers to match the Government definition of learning?

3.5 Occupational Sector analysis: Further research is required in order to gain a complete understanding of the occupational sectors entered by 16-18 year olds. A full analysis could include vocational courses as well as information from Work Based Learning (WBL) entry and would aid the provision of LMI

4. Support for young people with special or additional needs

4.1 Young People with Learning Difficulties or Disabilities (LDD): Our aim is to increase the engagement in learning for young people with learning difficulties or disabilities to the levels achieved by mainstream students. Opportunities to further this aim will be provided via developments within the 14 to 19 Curriculum Developments, The Foundation Learning Tier and Flexible Transport Pilots plus the potential LDD Virtual College Developments linked to the Tynedale Virtual College and changes in commissioning arrangements with the transfer of responsibility from the LSC to the Local Authority.

- A co-ordinated approach that secures breadth and diversity of provision will be essential especially the further development of appropriate post 16 work based opportunities that enable young people to aspire to the achievement of NVQ Level 1 in timescales matched to their abilities.

- A co-ordinated multi-agency approach to assessment (particularly statutory Learning Difficulty Assessments - formerly Section 139a Assessments) will be essential to identify the needs of these young people and commission the provision required to meet those needs.

4.2 Teenage Mums: To narrow the gap between outcomes for these young people and their peers further exploration and action is needed to enable:

- greater provision of appropriate post 16 opportunities for Teenage Mums.
- support to young people to raise their aspirations.
- action to convert current learning through health initiatives to meet DCSF 'In Learning' specifications.
- greater information sharing with Health Visitors, Midwives and partner agencies about the needs of teenage mums.

4.3 Young People in the Looked After Care System: To narrow the gap between outcomes for these young people and their peers partners need to take action to:

- raise their own levels of expectation and aspiration for young people who are Looked After.
- support young people to raise their aspirations.
- extend the time available on E2E to these young people to enable sufficient qualifications achievement to move on to the next learning opportunity.

4.4 Young People Supervised by the Youth Offending Service (YOS): To better understand the differences in the definitions of EET and ETE applied by the Government for YOS and Connexions.

- Build on information sharing and joint project work between the two organisations.

5 Equality and Diversity

5.1 Equitable engagement of young people from black, minority and ethnic (BME) groups: The percentage of young people whose ethnicity is not known has greatly reduced since 2008 but it still needs improvement. Work to improve information exchange with partners in education is ongoing but continues to require ongoing and urgent attention.

Low numbers of young people identifying as BME can result in the group percentage varying greatly from month to month based on one or two individuals. One young person can equal a large percentage of the cohort.

The total NEET and Unknown figures for the BME groups represent 6 or 7 young people in total.

5.2 Gender Issues: The gap between the numbers of girls and boys who are NEET has been reducing for some time and for 2009 there are now similar numbers of girls than boys who are NEET. A greater number of appropriate work based opportunities for those aged 18 are still needed for both genders especially those who are Teenage Parents.

5.3 Learning for boys: A primary challenge for partners is to improve the scope and range of learning opportunities to enable boys to achieve at least to those levels reached by girls, particularly in some key hot spots. Of critical importance is the need to match the learning offer to their needs and culture.

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