

Regional and sub-regional variation in NEETs – reasons, remedies and impact

Darshan Sachdev, Bethan Harries, Thomas Roberts

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Darshan Sachdev, Research Manager, Demand for Learning (DfL) Research Centre, Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA)

Bethan Harries, Researcher, DfL, LSDA

Thomas Roberts, Researcher, Sector Performance Research Centre, LSDA

Executive summary

The proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) has remained stable at around 9-10% of the 16-18 cohort since 1994 (Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), 2004a).

To tackle the NEET issue, a number of policy initiatives have been developed at both the national and local level to address both NEET prevention and NEET reduction. 'NEET prevention' initiatives are aimed at those 14 to 16 year olds who are still at school and have been identified as being at risk of disengaging from education, to ensure that on leaving school they continue in further education, or find training or employment opportunities. Post 16 'NEET reduction' initiatives aim to reengage young people who are NEET in further education, employment or training (EET).

Research has shown that whilst the size of the NEET group has remained stable, the make up of the group has not. Young people enter and leave the NEET group for a variety of reasons and only 1% of this group appear to remain NEET right through from 16 to 18 years of age (National Audit Office (NAO), 2004).

Furthermore, despite the stability of the overall figure for the NEET cohort in England, the numbers within any one region can vary dramatically from one area to the next. Most recent figures available from the Government Office for South East (November 2005) show that the NEET numbers for young people aged 16 to 18 years old in this region vary from 3.1% in Surrey to 7.8% in Berkshire, compared to the national average of 7.6%. The most recent figures for Yorkshire and the Humber (November 2005) show that the NEET numbers range from 4.2% in North Yorkshire to 11.2% in South Yorkshire.

It is within this context that the two regional LSCs - South East and Yorkshire & the Humber - commissioned the LSDA to examine the reasons for the observed sub-regional and sub-area variation in NEET numbers within the South East, and the Yorkshire & Humber regions. Although the study focuses on these two regions, many of the issues raised will be relevant to other parts of England

The aims of this research project were two-fold. Firstly, the study aimed to highlight the possible reasons underpinning the observed variation in NEET numbers within and across the two regions. Secondly, it aimed to identify the local solutions or current initiatives being developed and tested in the arena of learning, skills and progression to employment, within the two regions and elsewhere in England, to reduce, if possible, the observed variation and the NEET numbers; and to assess their perceived impact by young people and relevant professionals working with NEETs.

A literature review of both grey and published literature was carried out to find out what was already known about reasons for variations in NEET numbers and to identify initiatives that were being developed/implemented in terms of NEET prevention and NEET reduction in the two regions and elsewhere in England.

However, a number of difficulties were experienced when gathering information from across the country - much of the information relating to local initiatives was either out of date or was insufficient to enable an assessment of what worked in preventing young people becoming NEET and/or reducing NEET numbers.

Primary data for this study was collected via face to face and telephone interviews with staff from Connexions, local LSCs and other organisations working with NEETs in the target areas selected for each of the two regions. In addition, focus groups of young people were held in each of the two LSC regions to ascertain their perceptions on what causes young people to become and remain NEET.

The overarching conclusions arising from the research conducted in the two regions are presented in response to the key questions posed in this study. Conclusions specific to each of the two regions are presented in chapter 6 of this report.

Why NEET numbers vary within and between the two LSC regions – South East and Yorkshire and the Humber

The causes of variation in NEET numbers within and between the two regions appear to share common elements or factors. However, the local context with which these common factors interact appears to be critical in giving rise to the observed variations. These factors include:

- *Ineffectiveness of financial incentives* - The failure of financial incentives to encourage take up of learning and training opportunities appears to be more pronounced in economically deprived areas in the regions where benefit take up or the need to work is high.
- *Differential access to labour market* – Access to labour market appears to be much worse in areas where there are large numbers of SMEs or specialist employers, where learning providers do not understand the needs of local labour market, and where employers lack sufficient knowledge about the range of qualifications and the equivalence between vocational and academic qualifications.
- *Membership of disadvantaged communities* - Young people in communities affected by deprivation and multi-generational unemployment, appear to be more likely to have a poor sense of mobility, suffer discrimination in the labour market, lack suitable role-models, and lack access to suitable jobs in their local area.
- *Residence in areas with poor infrastructure* - Areas which have poor transport infrastructure, have poor and inadequate housing are more likely to have larger number of NEETs as young people in these areas are hampered from accessing further education and job opportunities.

What works and does not work in terms of NEET prevention

An understanding of the characteristics of young people who were likely to become NEET on leaving school appears to be key to designing programmes and initiatives

that work and achieve the aim of NEET prevention. The young people likely to become NEET are seen as a heterogeneous group with multiple needs. Successful interventions appear to be those which take into account the complexity and multiplicity of problems faced by individuals and offer appropriate level of support.

The key features of such strategies are likely to include:

- Timely intervention at school before disengagement and disaffection set in. This can help to ensure that:
 - problems, such as bullying, are dealt with effectively before they develop, thus decreasing the probability of a young person disengaging from school and becoming NEET. It can also prevent a future call on resources which would otherwise be required for intensive support after a young person has left school and become NEET
 - strong relationships can be developed between family, community and school which can also lead to a positive impact on siblings
- Provision of coordinated and holistic support at school from a range of agencies. Such support appears to be critical where multiple interventions are required. A coordinated and joined up approach appears to benefit all involved including, pastoral support advisers, external agencies and young people, as.
 - Resources are not duplicated in different agencies working with the same young person
 - all agencies acquire an in-depth knowledge of the young person involved and can target their services accordingly
 - young people receiving holistic support feel confident that all their concerns are being dealt with and are also less likely to play agencies off against each other
- Giving young people a role in making decisions about their choices, as it appears to be key to engaging young people who are likely to become NEET as they tend to be those who lack support at home, experience bullying and feel they are not listened to at school because of poor attainment and behaviour. The benefits of including young people in planning service delivery and personal development include improved confidence, a sense of achievement and self worth in young person. These are likely to reduce the probability of young person becoming NEET on leaving school, as their motivation levels and aspirations are likely to have been raised.
- Provision of an alternative curriculum appears to be essential to engaging 'potential NEETs'. The traditional academic pathway is not suitable for all young people which often leads less academic students to disengage from education altogether. An alternative curriculum is likely to both prevent drop out from school and prepare an individual for further education and training with a vocational element.
- Transitional support for those moving from primary to secondary school and those leaving secondary education seems critical for individuals with intensive support needs at a time when they are faced with a wide range of choices.

Continued support during this transition stage can potentially prevent a lapse in confidence and motivation, and consequent disengagement and disaffection from education.

What works and does not work in terms of NEET reduction

The characteristics of the NEET group are also central to identifying the key ingredients which are likely to influence what will work well in terms of NEET reduction. Young people who are NEET are seen as a heterogeneous group with multiple needs. However, they appear to fall into two distinct groups:

- **Core NEETs** - more likely to have social and behavioural problems. This group also comprises the 'Generational NEETs' - young people who come from families where the accepted norm is for adults to be unemployed.
- **Floating NEETs** - young people who may find themselves lacking direction and motivation and tend to move in and out of the NEET group, engaging in low paid and temporary work and short courses. This group contributes to 'NEET churn.'

The key aspects of good practice appear to include:

- Appropriate targeting of resources according to the need of particular group of NEETs and the local context in which support is being provided. This requires a detailed mapping of NEETS using the available data and deploying PAs and allocating resources on a geographical basis
- Holistic support which takes into account the complexity of issues involved as such support can prevent the need for multiple interventions by addressing the full range of issues affecting an individual and can also prevent young people from returning to the NEET group after they have left it. The provision from voluntary and community sector organisations appears to be valued by young people as it seems to fulfil this criteria and has the added advantage of being perceived as independent from statutory services.
- Positive partnerships between a range of agencies which work with young people as they appear fundamental to developing good practice. The complexity of the NEET group is such that numerous organisations and agencies need to be involved as they can bring their different perspectives and experience to the table in order to address the issues of concern to young people. Working together allows partners to:
 - share specialised expertise and knowledge
 - take collective responsibility for NEETs and issues impacting on NEET rather than placing responsibility on a single organisation i.e. Connexions
 - engage with the employer community
 - share data and knowledge about the destinations of young people

However, the plethora of meetings focusing on NEETs between various partner organisations is seen sometimes to lead to a lack of clarity about the responsibilities and accountabilities of respective organisations.

- Involving young people in decision making and recognising their achievements, no matter, how small, as it appears to be important. Young people in the NEET group are rarely involved in decision-making or given an opportunity to voice their concerns. In addition, young people who become NEET often have very poor or no qualifications from school and their sense of self-worth and self-confidence can be improved by noting and celebrating even small achievement which can contribute to them taking bigger steps towards engaging with educational or training opportunities. Additionally,
 - Young people's readiness to make decisions after leaving school and their sense of growing maturity needs to be utilised in enabling them to access further education and employment opportunities.
 - By involving young people in their own development planning, young people can be enabled to 'own' their problems and encouraged to be proactive in identifying their support needs and in recognising the distance travelled.
- Innovative practice (such as the use of sport, art and media to engage young people in project activities and learning opportunities) and informal learning techniques utilised by a range of projects in the region as they appear to encourage and motivate individuals with low aspiration and low sense of achievement.

Factors which impede the progress of initiatives focusing on NEET reduction include:

- Emphasis on hard outcomes and a disregard of soft outcomes by funders is an issue which appears to cause a great deal of concern among agencies working with NEETs. Young people who have failed to achieve at school and who have lacked adequate support in the home tend to have low aspirations and/or low motivation and self-esteem. Agencies with considerable experience of working with NEETS regard their first priority as tackling these issues before they can address over longer-term the issue of integrating young people into EET as:
 - short-term motivational classes are at times enough to build self-esteem and inform young people about their options
 - For agencies working with young people with a complex array of needs, achieving a hard outcome of integrating them into EET requires intensive support over a long-term to build trust, improve levels of motivation and confidence before the young people feel ready to consider whether they want to engage with further education, training or employment.
- The link between funding and targets based on hard outcomes is a source of concern for many agencies. For many NEETs, the achievement of such outcomes over a short-term is unrealistic. Such targets are also likely to skew provision, as services under pressure to meet the funders' targets tend to focus resources on those NEETs who are much easier to work with and are most likely to achieve the hard outcomes of engaging with EET. This is likely to deny those with complex needs, much needed support to help them into EET opportunities.
- Pre- Level 2 provision such as E2E, E2V, and Life Skills are valuable assets to post-16 learning provision for the NEET group. They theoretically fill a gap that had previously existed, as many young people are not capable of achieving Level

2. Yet despite the perceived benefits of pre-level 2 provision it is not accessible to all because

- Demand for E2E has outstripped supply and is likely to be targeted towards those most likely to achieve a hard outcome within the prescribed 20 weeks.
 - A lack of pre E2E provision appears to be a significant problem in the South East and the Humber. The introduction of E2E is regarded to have drawn resources away from previously successful Life skills programmes
 - West Yorkshire had been chosen as a pilot area for the introduction of E2V. However, projects/organisations in the South East have found it difficult to attract funding as they have been competing with projects in the north of the country (traditionally seen as less affluent and therefore, a higher priority for funding in this area).
- Provision of 'Roll on Roll off' courses is insufficient to meet demand. The availability of such courses can prevent young people from joining the NEET group.

Implications

Implications for organisations working with the NEET group that emerged from the conclusions are detailed below. Implications for other agencies, such as Local Authorities have also been highlighted where they have a role to play in addressing some of the broader issues raised by this study.

Implications for the LSC

- ◇ Incentives such as training allowances and EMAs do not appear to be sufficiently attractive to encourage take up in the most deprived areas and a better understanding, through further research, is needed of the amounts young people are likely to consider adequate.
- ◇ The potential for young people who leave school without traditional qualifications, to enter EET appears to be restricted by the lack of awareness among employers of the range of qualifications awarded to young people and their equivalence to traditional qualifications such as GCSEs and A levels.
- ◇ Resources could be utilised more effectively through the use of early intervention strategies as it is likely to lead to a reduction in the number of young people becoming NEET in the future and therefore, can reduce the future call and demand on resources for intensive support
- ◇ Using data to map the geographical location of NEETs is likely to support targeted intervention and thus increase the effectiveness of resource utilisation.
- ◇ Emphasis on targets associated with hard outcomes is likely to prevent providers from targeting resources at both the hardest to reach and those who require intensive support
- ◇ Soft outcomes have the potential to lead to hard outcomes in the long-term, and to reduce the likelihood of NEET churn. They need to be seen as an investment for the future

- ◇ Incentivisation of employers to engage with NEETs by offering them work-based learning opportunities or work-placements needs to be considered to increase the pool of relevant opportunities for NEET young people
- ◇ Provision of sufficient pre-E2E programmes for young people not able to access existing E2E provision needs to be considered.

Implications for Connexions

- ◇ There appears to be a need to raise awareness among young people of the long-term benefits and future earning potential of taking up training even when it pays a lower level of income compared to a job for equivalent hours
- ◇ The effects of multi-generational employment within families and communities on young people are likely to be more effectively addressed through initiatives that encourage parental input.
- ◇ Early intervention strategies that target young people who are likely to become NEET appear to have proven successful and consideration needs to be given to a greater investment in this area
- ◇ Transitional support between school and post-16 provision appears to have proven successful but provision is patchy and needs to be made more consistent and to be adequately resourced
- ◇ Involving young people in decisions about their future options has been found to raise their aspiration and motivation levels, and needs to underpin all work with young people likely to become NEETS. In addition, celebrating small achievements are likely to increase young people's engagement with EET opportunities
- ◇ Involvement of employers in LMCs needs to be considered as it can be of benefit to not just young people but also to agencies working to reduce NEET numbers. It can lead to an increased awareness among employers of the NEETs issue, improve their understanding of the range of vocational qualifications and how they compare, and lead to work-placement or work-based learning opportunities for young people.

Implications for Local Education Authorities

- ◇ Coordinated support, from all relevant agencies, to young people likely to become NEET while they are still at school has proven successful. However, this appears to be patchy and needs to be made integral to work with all potential NEETs
- ◇ Anti-bullying policies which can effectively deal with and stamp out bullying are necessary to ensure that students do not disengage with school and consequently, education.
- ◇ Alternative curricula which offer a range of vocational options and have the flexibility to meet the needs of young people with wide ranging interests and aptitudes can help to engage young people who can not cope with academic curricula; engender self-confidence; and equip them with the basic skills they need to tackle more formal assessments at a later stage.
- ◇ An alternative curriculum is much more likely to engage the hardest to reach but in order for it to have the desired impact on NEET numbers, consideration needs to be given to how its status and the awareness of its

potential can be raised within the FE sectors and with employers, especially SMEs.

Implications for Local Authorities

- ◇ Availability of an accessible transport system appears to be key to ensuring that young people are better able to access any further education or suitable job opportunities the areas has to offer

Implications for learning providers

- ◇ Young people's employability in the local labour market can be improved if they can access learning and skills provision locally which can give them the qualifications and skills demanded and needed by the local labour market.
- ◇ Provision of roll-on roll-off courses can help to prevent young people joining the NEET group as they can access learning opportunities as and when they are ready without having to wait long periods to start courses, causing them to become dishearten and disengaged.
- ◇ Limited provision at levels suited to the abilities of some young people in the NEET group can mean that they are less likely to access education and training opportunities.

Implications for all

- ◇ Partnership working is an invaluable asset but there needs to be a clarity about to how agreed actions should be progressed and where accountability lies. This can lead to a coherent and co-ordinated approach to tackling NEETs both regionally and sub-regionally, while still allowing flexibility at local level for staff to tailor the interventions to the specific circumstances of NEETs in their local area. The emerging Children's Trusts offer an ideal opportunity for building effective and sustainable partnerships across the sector divide, to tackle the issue of NEETs.
- ◇ For the 'generational', 'core' or long-term NEETs, a multi-pronged approach is needed which can address issues as wide ranging as improving parenting skills, developing deprived communities, improving the infra-structure within these communities, and reducing child poverty.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

A Sunday Times article by Winnell, on 27 March 2005 noted

A study by the Department of Education and Skills (DfES) conservatively estimates that each new NEET dropping out of education at 16 will cost the taxpayers an average of £97,000 during their lifetime, with the worst costing more than £300,000 apiece. Their impact on crime, public health and antisocial behaviour was so marked...that a single 157,000 strong cohort of 16 to 18 year old NEETs would cost the country a total of £15 billion by the time they died prematurely in about 2060. They are ...22 times more likely to be teenage mothers, 50 percent more likely to suffer from poor health, 60 percent more likely to be involved with drugs and more than 20 times more likely to become criminals.

It is not surprising, therefore, that with this stark prognosis for a significant number of young people in our community, the issue of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) was highlighted as a policy priority in the 14-19 White paper published by the DfES in February 2005. The White Paper highlighted four groups of young people as more likely to become NEET. These include young people:

- with low attainment at GCSE level
- from low socio-economic groups
- who truant persistently in year 11
- who are teenage mothers

A recent report by the Social Exclusion Unit (2004a) noted that despite increased participation in training and education, reduced youth unemployment, the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) has remained stable at around 9-10%, since 1994. A number of other writers have also commented on the difficulty in achieving a noticeable reduction in the number of NEETs despite an array of policies, such as, Connexions, Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs), the New Deal for young people, Modern Apprenticeships (MAs), Entry to Employment (E2E) and the Increased Flexibility Programme (IFP) - aimed at achieving just this objective. A key PSA target is “to reduce the proportion of 16-18 year olds NEETs by 2 percentage points by 2010”.

The policy initiatives are largely aimed at young people aged 14 to 19. ‘NEET prevention’ initiatives are aimed at those 14 to 16 year olds who are still at school and appear disengaged and disaffected with education, in order to ensure that on leaving school they continue in further education, or seek training or job opportunities. ‘NEET reduction’ initiatives target young people who have left full-time education and are not in further education, employment or in training schemes.

The phenomenon of ‘NEET churn’ is increasingly coming to the notice of policy makers and professionals working with young people – first brought to general attention by a report by the National Audit Office (2004) on Connexions service

advice and guidance. While the majority of young people leave this group and manage to avoid re-entering the NEET group, a significant minority who leave the NEET group for further education or employment find it difficult to sustain their education or job placement, and rejoin the NEET group after short periods.

Thus, the NEET group is not stable, with young people entering and leaving this group for a variety of reasons. Only 1% of this group appear to remain NEET right through from 16 to 18 years of age. Additionally, there is considerable variation in NEET numbers within different groups of young people. The recent National Statistics issued by the DfES in November 2005 showed that in comparison to White students, Pakistani and Bangladeshi young people aged 19 were more likely to be NEET (10% compared to 16%), whereas Indians were least likely to be NEET (5%). The data also showed that young people with a disability or a health problem were three times more likely to be NEET at 19 as those without (27% compared to 9%). 28% of young people with fewer than 5 GCSEs at any grade were also likely to be NEET at 19 and those excluded from school at some point in year 10 or 11 were more likely to be NEET at 19 (18%) than those who had not truanted (10%).

Furthermore, despite the stability of the overall figure for the NEET numbers in England, the numbers within any one region can vary dramatically from one area to next.

1.2 The LSDA study

This project was commissioned by two regional LSCs to seek an understanding of some of the reasons behind the considerable variation in NEET numbers to be found in their regions – South East and Yorkshire and Humber, as the Connexions data for November 2005 shows that NEET numbers varied from 3.1% in Surrey to 7.8% in Berkshire, in the South East region, and from 4.2 % in North Yorkshire to 11.2% in the South Yorkshire, in the Yorkshire & the Humber region, compared to the national average of 7.6%.

The aims of this research project were two-fold. Firstly, the study aimed to highlight the possible reasons underpinning the observed variation in NEET numbers within and across the two regions. Secondly, it aimed to identify the local solutions or current initiatives being developed and tested in the arena of learning, skills and progression to employment, within the two regions and elsewhere in England, to reduce, if possible, the observed variation and the NEET numbers; and to assess their perceived impact by young people and relevant professionals working with NEETs.

The objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To examine why NEET numbers vary within and between two LSC regions - South East and the Yorkshire and the Humber.
2. To examine what initiatives have been implemented within each region in the arena of learning, skills and progression to employment to prevent young people becoming NEETs and to reduce the number of NEETs.
3. To examine what impact, if any, such initiatives have had on reducing the numbers in the NEET group within each of the two regions

4. To identify what appears to work in preventing young people becoming NEETs and reducing NEET numbers from available evidence within the two regions and elsewhere in England.

The next chapter details the methodology adopted for this study. It is followed by a chapter which includes a brief review of the literature on NEETs to highlight what is known about:

- the NEET phenomenon
- the reasons for variations in NEET numbers within regions
- the initiatives developed and implemented to ensure
 - o NEET prevention
 - o NEET reductionand the impacts achieved.

2. Methodology

The methodology for this study comprised **five key elements**:

- **Analysis of statistical data** to gather information on the patterns of variations in NEET numbers within each of the two LSC regions.
- **A review of literature** - both grey and published - to identify the reasons for the intra-regional variation in NEET numbers; and to identify various learning and employment related initiatives being developed/ implemented in the two regions and nationally to prevent young people becoming NEET and to reduce NEET numbers. A concerted effort was made to search for literature on models of good practice elsewhere in England, outside of the two focus regions. A search for initiatives was carried out using the National Youth Agency (NYA) case study database and European Social Fund (ESF) databases. However, much of the information contained in these data-bases on local initiatives was either out of date or was insufficient to enable an assessment of what worked in preventing young people becoming NEET and/or reducing NEET numbers. In addition, a literature search was carried out using the IDOX database to identify any models of good practice. LSDA's Regional Directors and associates were also approached to enquire about recent published or unpublished reports on NEETs in their region. These searches were not very fruitful.
- **Development of relevant research instruments** including guides for one-to-one interviews and focus group interviews with a range of professionals from Connexions Partnerships, Local Education Authorities, local Learning and Skills Council, voluntary and community sector organisations. In addition, **written questionnaires** were designed for completion by key individuals who were not available for interview during the field-work stage of this study (Please see Appendices 1 and 2).
- **Face to face or telephone interviews** with relevant staff within Connexions Partnerships, local LSCs and other organisations working with NEETs in each of the two target areas (Kent & Medway and Berkshire in the South East; West Yorkshire and Humber in the Yorkshire & the Humber region) for the two LSC regions to identify further reasons for variations in NEET numbers; and the measures adopted to prevent young people from becoming NEET and to reduce NEET numbers.
- A maximum of **four focus groups of up to 15 young people** each (2 in each LSC region), and including those identified as NEET, to ascertain their perceptions on what causes young people to become and remain NEET, and what helps them to leave the NEET group.

Supplementary information about the work undertaken to review the information from each LSC region; and the fieldwork undertaken with professionals working with NEET young people, and with young people themselves in the two regions, is provided in the chapters on regional reviews and findings, which follow the next chapter.

3. A review of the literature

3.1 What do we know about the NEET phenomenon

A seminal report 'Bridging the Gap' which set out to identify the underlying causes of the NEET phenomenon, was published by Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) in 1999. The report shed light on the scale of the NEET problem for the first time and some of the underlying trends. It also highlighted the characteristics of the NEET population and pointed out that the number of 16 to 18 year olds not participating in learning or work was much higher in some areas than the national average, among those young people who had attended certain schools, among those from some minority ethnic groups and among those from certain vulnerable groups. It also noted that the non-participation did not result solely from young people's 'inability or unwillingness to enter post-16 options' but that young people were "as likely to enter learning or work and then to stop" and that it was as important to look at how to engage young people into learning and work opportunities as it was to identify what could prevent young people from sustaining their place in further education or the labour market once they had entered it.

A study by Popham (2003) noted that as the NEET group was not homogenous, a detailed understanding of the factors which led to different young people becoming or remaining NEET was critical to developing tailored solutions for young people in order to effect a reduction in NEET numbers. He also noted that a key determinant for young people becoming and remaining NEET was "low levels of aspiration and little motivation". (p 8)

A paper published by the treasury in 2004 on the New Deal for Skills pointed out that the NEET group included unemployed and inactive, and roughly equal numbers of young men and women. The unemployed constituted about 60% and the rest are inactive. The paper also noted that the NEET young men were more likely to be unemployed whereas the NEET young women were more likely to be inactive. Of the inactive group, around half were parents or carers and a further 6 percent were likely to be sick or disabled.

Risk factors which may lead to young people disengaging with education were identified in a literature review commissioned by the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU, 2004b). Many of these young people, the report notes, "especially those [early school leavers] without Level 2 qualifications...are increasingly identified with social exclusion" (p.19). Many of the risk factors identified for the former group, therefore, also apply to the latter group. Of the risk factors listed in the SEU report, many are pertinent to the NEET group and were first highlighted in the SEU report published in 1999. They include:

- **Poor educational achievement, often linked to**
 - **Poor acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills**
- **Disadvantaged family backgrounds, resulting from**
 - **low income of parents, compounded by living in poor neighbourhoods with**
 - **second or third-generation unemployment in families**
 - **low expectations based on past employment patterns**
 - **geographical isolation exacerbated by poor public transport links**

- strongly held beliefs of being discriminated against by employers because of area of residence
- Having a chronic illness, disability, learning difficulty or disability, or special educational needs
- Being a care-leaver
- Being homeless
- Having mental health problems
- Having misused drugs and alcohol
- Local labour markets with poor job prospects

Having care responsibilities for another family member, having emotional and behavioural problems, being a young offender or being a teenage mother have also been identified as being instrumental in young people becoming NEET (Hoggarth and Smith et al, 2004).

Negative attitudes towards school arising from boredom, poor relationship with teachers, anti-school cultures, and regarding education and qualifications to have little value in the world of work, were also seen to contribute to young people becoming NEET (Payne, 2002).

Coles et al's (2002) literature review shed light on a number of additional factors which lead young people to become NEET including:

- Truancy and exclusion from school before the age of 16
- Membership of some minority ethnic groups
- Low, or no, educational achievements at the age of 16

A report by Davies (2005) also highlighted some of the factors which are likely to contribute to young people becoming and remaining NEET, including:

- A curriculum which fails to engage and motivate young people who then disengage completely with the education system
- Privileging of academic education over vocational education which is perceived as being for less able students
- The complex maze of qualifications and pathways which face young people who are not taking the traditional academic route and which they find very difficult to navigate

A research report from Connexions Cornwall and Devon (2005) highlighted that of over 700 young people seen by Personal Advisers (PAs), 31% had not engaged with education since year 11; 17% had dropped out of full-time education; 25% had either left or lost employment; and nearly 10% had dropped out of an E2E or a work based learning placement. The reasons young people gave for becoming NEET included personal circumstances (18%), family pressure (6%); homelessness (5%); being on the wrong course (5%); not liking the work based learning placement or the post 16 learning provider (9%). When asked what would have been most likely to prevent young people becoming NEET, the responses elicited included – better advice and guidance (13%); earlier support (13%); help with family or personal situation (13%); help with job search (10%). When asked to comment on what would help the young person re-engage, PAs regarded the following as key – motivation improvement (16%), intensive job search (12%), improved applications (9%) and work trial /taster (9%).

3.2 What are the reasons for variations in NEET numbers within regions

The report by NAO (2004) into the quality of provision by Connexions service identified some of the reasons for sub-regional variations in NEET numbers. These could be caused by seasonal variations and the number of young people whose activity was 'unknown'. Socio-economic factors also influenced the size and characteristics of the NEET group in different communities.

A recent report by Green and Owen (2006) pointed to some of the reasons for sub-regional variations in NEET numbers - that of differential access to labour market by young people based on their area of residence – rural, urban or suburban; and the nature of the local labour market. The researchers noted that those with poor skills are likely to have fewer opportunities and face more constraints in the labour market – both in skills terms and geographically – than those who are more highly skilled. They added that for those living in areas with a mining or manufacturing heritage, there is less likelihood of being in work and that the local labour market demand exerted a great deal of influence on the probability of the low-skilled finding employment.

3.3 Initiatives aimed at NEET prevention and impact achieved

A range of policy initiatives have emerged over the years to prevent disengagement and disaffection among school-leavers, to ensure that they choose and/ or are guided and supported to choose from the options of further education, training and employment.

Connexions service and Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) have been identified as making a significant contribution to increased participation in education among young people most of risk of disengaging with education. For a detailed look at the impact achieved by these initiatives, please refer to a review of the literature commissioned by the Social Exclusion Unit (2004b).

The review noted that the “twin components of advice and support from a skilled professional, and financial incentives, emerge as key components of success” (p.40). Freda (2005) reporting for the SEQUAL Development Partnership also noted a finding of the National Association of Connexions Partnerships that Connexion partnerships had been instrumental in reducing the number of NEETs “by an average of 14% over two years” (p.23).

Connexions partnerships were launched in April 2001 to support 13 to 19 year old young people make informed choices. The Connexions Service comprises a national unit and 47 partnerships which are coterminous with local LSCs. In 2002, they were set the target of reducing the proportion of NEETs by 10 percentage points, by November 2004. Hence, one of their main objective was to provide support to those who were ‘outside leaning or at risk of under-achievement’ (SEU, 2004b) – those who had dropped out of learning and employment, and those who were at risk of disengaging from learning in the future. A network of PAs provide information, advice, and guidance differentiated according to young people’s needs, to enable them to access and

engage with learning and training and/ or employment. A key element of Connexions is the partnerships between careers advice, youth work, youth offending teams, social services, local education authorities, drug action teams and other services for young people, into a one-stop personal guidance and integrated youth support service available outside the schools.

A National Audit Office (2004) assessment of the quality of service provided by Connexions partnerships found that there were wide variations in performance between partnerships but that the service was on track in achieving their target of 10 percentage points reduction in the number of NEETs. The report also commented on the results of a survey which had found that most young people who had met a PA had found the contact helpful in informing them of their options.

A report by Hoggarth and Smith (2004) which details the findings of a study, commissioned by DfES, into the impact of the Connexions service on young people, especially those at risk of underachievement and disaffection, identified the aspects of Connexions provision which worked well with the NEET group. These included:

- Presence of PAs at Job Centres when young people sign on, leading to referrals from Job Centre staff
- Intensive outreach work at time, and in venues and settings which suit young people
- Avoiding an early and exclusive focus on outcomes which lead to education, employment or training (EET) placements
- Focus on soft outcomes by PAs, such as addressing loss of confidence, to facilitate the building of rapport with young people.
- Continuity of contact and availability of support from PAs especially for NEETs who fail to sustain EET placements.

Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) were designed to offer means tested (based on parents' annual income) financial support to young people from low-income families, to enable them to meet the costs of continuing in education in years 12, 13 and 14. To qualify for a weekly EMA of £10, £20 or £30, young people are required to fulfil the conditions of their learning agreements which set out their learning goals. The basic requirement for receiving this amount is attendance in taught sessions in a school or college for a minimum of 12 hours per week leading to a recognised qualification. In addition to the weekly allowance, students receive an attendance bonus payment each term, and an end-of-course achievement payment, to encourage attendance and engagement with the course.

This scheme was piloted in 10 areas in 1999 and rolled out nationally from 2004. Evaluation of the pilots suggested that the EMA led to increased participation in Year 12 by over 4%, and in Year 13 by over 6 %. It also led to improved learner retention (Middleton et al 2004). However, the national rollout of EMAs has shown much more modest gains in participation at age 16. Although the DfES had expected participation rates for 16 year olds in full time education to increase by 4 percentage points, only 1 percentage point increase was achieved. This was offset by a fall of nearly half a percentage point drop in the numbers who enrolled in work-based learning (Middleton et al, 2005). The evaluators also found that by the age of 19, EMA had ceased to have any

noticeable effect on participation in full-time education and that there was no significant effect on attainment levels.

Examination of these outcomes has led Delorenzi and Robinson (2005) to suggest “that the EMA may have been over-sold as an instrument for improving participation and especially attainment” (p.90)

Increased Flexibility Programme (IFP) was established in 2003 to improve the perceived relevance of education for those 14 to 16 year olds who might otherwise disengage. This programme supports partnerships of schools, Further Education (FE) colleges, and providers of work-based learning in order to increase the opportunities for vocational learning for this age group, and to extend participation in education and training after 16.

A recent evaluation of the IFP commissioned carried out by Golden et al for the DfES, found that the majority of young people who took new GCSEs and GNVQs attained their qualifications (91% and 80% respectively). The achievement of GNVQs and NVQs by young people contributed to them gaining higher total point scores than would have been expected given their prior attainment levels and other characteristics. However, students who took GCSEs in vocational subjects or GNVQs did not do as well as the students who did not participate in the programme.

IFP partnerships also managed to achieve their transition targets as 90 % of those young people who had been involved in IFP in schools continued into further education or training after leaving school at 16. Feedback from young people suggests that participation in IFP had been a significant factor in their decision about their post-16 destination.

The evaluators concluded from the evidence that “IFP participants had developed their social skills and confidence in their employability skills, including interpersonal, communication and problem solving skills, and their attitude towards school, suggest that, on the whole, the IFP made a valuable contribution to the education of the...participants”.

New initiatives which are being developed and piloted currently include a pilot 14-16 programme for students most at risk of disengaging from school, based on the Entry to Employment (E2E) programme for those aged 16 and over.

3.4 Initiatives aimed at NEET reduction and impact achieved

This section briefly outlines some of the national policy initiatives which have been introduced to effect reduction in NEET numbers, and the impact they have achieved.

New Deal for Young People was set up to support 18 to 24 year olds who had been unemployed for six months or more, to enable them to enter the labour market by either getting a job, or by returning to education or training. Support is structured in three stages. The ‘Gateway’ lasts 4 months and entails support from a personal advisor in applying for jobs. The ‘Options’ stage lasts 6 months and entails either entering further education or training, taking up a subsidised

job, working on a community environmental project, or working for a voluntary organisation. The final stage is that of 'Follow-through' and last 4 months where the young person can access further support with job-searching. The initiative aims to make young people employable and employment ready (SEU, 2004b).

This scheme was seen to have contributed to a significant fall in unemployment of 40,000 and to lead to an increased possibility of a New Deal participant leaving unemployment. (SEU, 2004b)

Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) were set up to offer young people aged 14 and over, the opportunity to access training opportunities. They were offered at two levels to those over 16 – the Foundation Modern Apprenticeship (FMA) at level 2 and the Advanced Modern Apprenticeship at level 3. Young people aged 14 to 16 can access the Young Apprenticeships

The report by SEU (2004b) notes that the MA scheme is generally seen to be a success, hence the widening of its scope from selective entry to universal entitlement, including the introduction of young apprenticeships. However, this report also includes some findings from a report by the Training Standards Council, published in 2000, about the operation of MAs - that MAs led to relatively low levels of retention and certification, and an average participation rate of one year out of the expected two, in areas such as construction and engineering where two to three years is more common; that there was inadequate assessment of basic and key skills needed for remedial action in advance of training; and that there was a lack of integration between key skills off-site teaching and work-based training.

Now referred to as Apprenticeships and Young Apprenticeships, they offer on-the-job training and technical certificates, NVQs and Key Skills qualifications.

The **Entry to Employment (E2E)** initiative was launched throughout England in 2003 for 16- 18 year olds (up to 24 years with permission from the regional LSC) and combines education with work experience and targets those not ready or able to enter MA. It gives young people the opportunity to acquire vocational knowledge, skills, gain confidence, employability skills, and basic and/ or key skills by sampling a range of work and learning contexts. Its key objective is to provide a positive and flexible learning experience to young people through an individual learning plan, thus enabling them to progress to apprenticeships or further education (SEU, 2004b).

E2E was intended to be the '*root of the apprentice tree*' but a survey report by the Adult Learning Inspectorate found that only 6% of young people went on to become apprentices. However, in addition to those young people who went on to become apprentices, 34 per cent of all E2E graduates went on to find a job, start college or enter work-based training. The report also found that progression rates for young people with disabilities were good at 33 per cent but were lower for ethnic minorities at just 28 per cent. The report noted that most E2E providers had been effective in supporting learners to develop their personal and social skills and that the best programmes were highly individualised to learners' needs. However, limited resources were available to support staff and that the delivery of the vocational element of the programme was 'haphazard' in its choice and availability of work experience (ALI, 2005).

The very rapid intake of young people into E2E, after its introduction across England, caused concern about pressures of over-subscription and the impact on resources. The LSC addressed this by introducing tighter eligibility criteria and a shorter target course length. Youth workers and Connexions advisers have argued that this has meant that the young people who are NEET have been excluded from E2E programmes (Rogers, 2004; Readfearn, 2005).

Other strategies and initiatives

Some of the NEET reduction strategies or initiatives have been aimed at certain 'at risk' groups such as care-leavers (Connexions Greater Merseyside) while others have tried to tackle some of the causes for young people becoming and remaining NEETs, such as low motivation. For instance, Connexions Cheshire and Warrington introduced a programme of 'motivational work experience' offering 360 places of 10-12 weeks to address the low motivation of NEETs (Popham, 2003).

Popham (2003) also reported on a strategy developed by Connexions Greater Merseyside to monitor and reduce NEET churn. Young people who had had three entries into the Post-16 learning period were targeted for allocating intensive support.

Activity and Learning Agreements

From April 2006, the DfES is piloting a new initiative in 12 areas around England, called the Activity and Learning Agreements. The schemes aim to work with around 30,000 16 or 17 year olds who are not in school, not in work or lacking basic skills. The young people will sign personal contracts with their personal advisor where, in return for financial support, they will agree to return to education or receive skills and vocational training. The pilot areas include Greater Manchester, Greater Merseyside, Lancashire, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Central London, East London, Kent & Medway, the Black Country, Cornwall and Devon, Tyne & Wear, and Essex, Southend and Thurrock.

Activity Agreement and Allowance pilot schemes in 8 of the areas will be aimed at 16 and 17 year olds who have dropped out of education and are currently out of work. They will be offered between £20 and £40 a week if they agree to commit to a plan to reintegrate them into education or training, including work-based training.

In addition, Learning Agreement pilots in 8 of the areas will be aimed at 16 and 17 year olds who are in work but not receiving accredited training. The funding will be used to support training for qualifications, and will test the impact of subsidies for employers who allow their workers time off for training.

It is hoped that these pilots will help to identify what is needed in order to encourage those young people who are most at risk of disengagement to undertake the type of activity that will help to improve their confidence and their skills.

3.5 Summary

This chapter has provided a quick review of the literature on NEETs. It has included a look at some of the underlying causes of the NEET phenomenon, at some of the reasons for the existence of sub-regional variations in NEET numbers; and the national initiatives which have been introduced to prevent young people becoming NEET and reduce the number of young people who are NEET by re-engaging them with education, employment and training.

Findings from the evaluation of the various initiatives described here suggest that work-based training opportunities for school leavers, as offered by apprenticeships and the New Deal for young people, appear to give them the confidence and skills they need to secure permanent employment. The success of E2E once again is attributable to the opportunity it gives young people to develop personal and social skills which they need to give them confidence that they can secure jobs. The flexibility inherent in such provision enabling it to be tailored to meet learners' needs also appears to add to its value.

The success of much of the provision aimed at preventing young people from falling into the NEET group, such as Connexions and IFP also appears to arise from its potential to improve the social skills of young people, including interpersonal, communication and problem solving skill as well as their confidence levels and their attitudes towards education and school. These outcomes are likely to contribute to an increased probability that young people will participate in further education or access training opportunities and decrease the likelihood that they will become NEET when they leave school.

The next chapter reviews the existing data and literature on NEETs in the South East and the Yorkshire & the Humber regions.

4. NEETs in the two LSC regions – a review

4.1 NEETs in the South East

4.1.1 Introduction

The South East region is made up of six sub-regions:

- o Berkshire
- o Kent
- o Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire
- o South Central
- o Surrey
- o Sussex

In November 2005 the total number of 16-18 year olds in the South East was 261, 066. The percentage of NEET in the region was 5.6% (14, 318). The percentage of young people who are NEET varies across the region from 3.1% in Surrey to 7.8% in Berkshire.¹

The aims of this section are:

- o to examine the sub-regional and intra area variations in NEETs across the South East and to shed light on some of the possible reasons for these variations;
- o to look at some of the initiatives which have been developed by Local Authorities, Connexions services and the voluntary sector to re-engage NEETS with education, employment and/or training opportunities and to prevent young people becoming NEET; and
- o to assess, where possible, the impact of these initiatives.

This section also reviews the findings of previous research into the issue of NEETS in this region. Although this section looks at data from across the region, its primary focus is the two target areas selected for this study- Kent and Medway, and Berkshire.

4.1.2 Methodology

Key organisations and individuals working with NEETs in Kent and Berkshire were contacted and asked to provide reports and evaluations of projects. Organisations in Kent forwarded a variety of project reports and business plans, which have been used to formulate a picture of the provision for NEET prevention and reduction. The situation in Berkshire was slightly different, as they had recently published a report on their NEET provision entitled *Provision for Young People not in Employment, Education and Training (NEET)*. All the organisations contacted for this study referred to this report as the main source of information on NEET provision in Berkshire. As a result the majority of the information on NEET provision in Berkshire has been derived from this report.

¹ These figures are those adjusted in the Connexions Management Information (MI) data

The data for the South East region used below came from Connexions Management Information (MI) data, unless otherwise stated, and was obtained from Government Office for South East (GOSE).

4.1.3 Overview of the South East's economic situation

Employment and unemployment

According to data from National Statistics (January 2006), the South East has an unemployment rate of 4.1%, which is 0.9% less than the national average and the lowest of any region in the UK. The workforce is generally well educated, with nearly 88% of the working age population holding some form of qualification. Some 28% of the economically active hold a qualification at NVQ level 4 and over 50% hold an NVQ level 3 or higher (GOSE, undated).

Economy

The region makes a major contribution to the UK economy, accounting for 15.6% of total UK Gross Value Added (GVA) in 2003. In broad terms the South East economy can be categorised as being advanced, high cost, high income, broadly based and service oriented. The South East is clearly a prosperous area with an advanced economy and highly educated workforce. The relatively low number of NEETs reflects this, 5.6% compared to a national rate of 9%. (GOSE, undated).

Research conducted into the NEET issue in the South East by GOSE has identified a number of key issues:

- a significant sub-regional variation exists.
- E2E often does not meet the needs of young people – it does not address issues of motivation, self-confidence and basic life skills. It is worth noting here that this conclusion from the GOSE research is not accepted by others working with NEETs in the South East.
- E2E is not necessarily suitable for everyone who is NEET- for many young people it is too great a jump. There is a lack of provision which bridges the gap between being NEET and entering into E2E

4.1.4 Statistical analysis of the NEETs in the South East

The data analysis is based on Management Information (MI) data collected on a monthly basis by Connexions between November 2004 and December 2005. This data provides an overview of the NEET situation and demonstrates the intra-regional and intra-area variations and fluctuations in South East that occur during the year.

There are six Connexions Partnerships in the South East. The figures and tables below provide breakdown of the data by these sub-regions of South East:

- Berkshire (Bracknell Forest, Reading, Slough, West Berkshire, Windsor and Maidenhead, Wokingham)
- Kent and Medway
- Milton Keynes/Oxfordshire/Buckinghamshire (MKOB)
- South Central (Hampshire, Portsmouth, Isle of Wight and Southampton)
- Surrey
- Sussex (Brighton and Hove, East Sussex and West Sussex)

Figure 1: Percentage of 16-18 year old NEETs (adjusted)

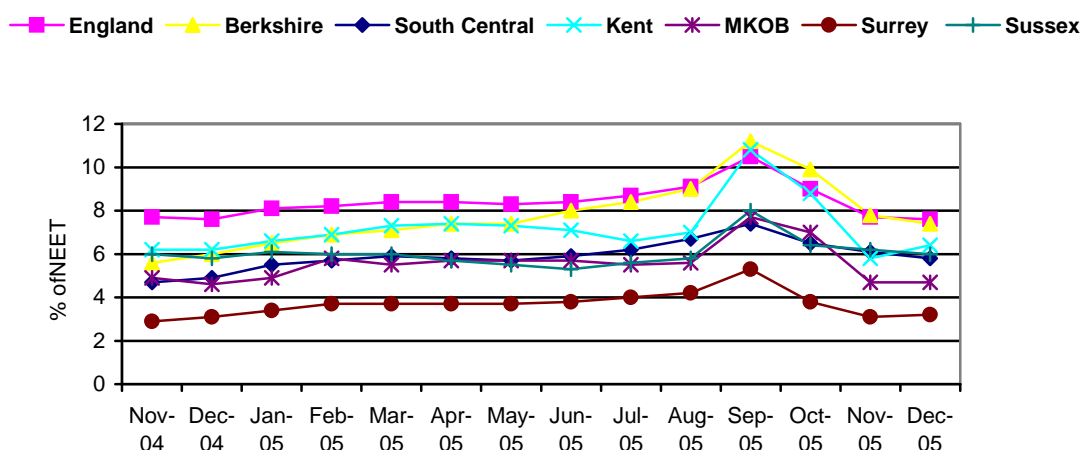


Figure 1 shows the breakdown of the number of NEETs (adjusted)² across the South East between December 2004 and December 2005 compared with the England average. The percentage of NEETs in the South East has remained largely below the England average. It also demonstrates that the number of NEETs fluctuates throughout the year with the highest rates recorded in August and September. This is a reflection of the academic year - the majority of school leavers leave in July - and consequently August and September are traditionally the months when school leavers will be looking for work or applying for further education. As a result of this yearly fluctuation in NEET numbers an average annual NEET rate would not be an accurate reflection of the NEET issue. Therefore Connexions base their annual assessment of the NEET population on the number of NEETs recorded in November. Table 1 compares the November results for 2004 and 2005.

Table 1: NEETs in the South East: Percentage change between November 2004 and November 2005

		Nov-04	Nov-05	Difference
South East	%	5.2	5.6	0.4
Berks	%	5.6	7.8	2.2
South Central	%	4.7	6.1	1.4
Kent	%	6.2	5.8	-0.4
MKOB	%	4.9	4.7	-0.2
Surrey	%	2.9	3.1	0.2
Sussex	%	6.0	6.2	0.2

Overall, NEET numbers have risen by 0.4% across the South East between November 2004 and November 2005. Berkshire saw the most significant rise (2.2%) while Kent saw the largest reduction (0.4%). In November 2005 Berkshire had the highest number of NEETs followed by Sussex, while Surrey had the lowest.

² Adjusted figures are used by Connexions and are calculated according to MI guidelines by taking into account a proportion of the Unknowns

These figures show that compared to the national average (9%) the South East has a relatively low NEET population. Even the areas in the South East with the highest numbers of NEETs were still well below the national average.

In addition to the number of NEETs it is important to consider the number of 16-18 year olds whose situation is unknown as some of them are likely to be NEET.

Figure 2: Percentage of 16-18 year old Unknowns

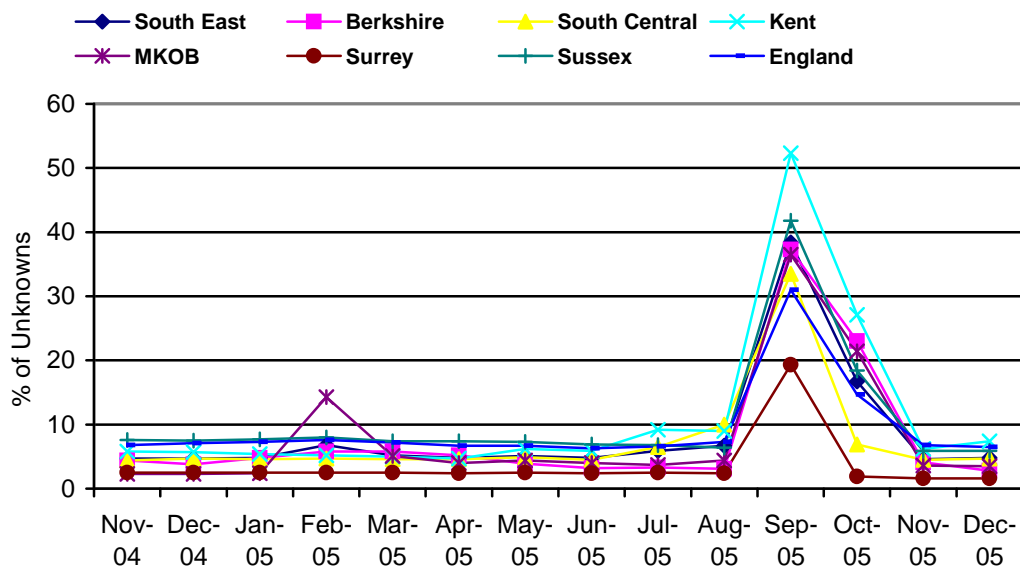


Figure 2 demonstrates that the number of 16-18 year olds whose destination is unknown follows a similar pattern to the NEET numbers (there is a large increase during August and September). Table 2 shows that there has been a slight reduction (0.1%) in the number of 16-18 year olds whose situations are unknown. In November 2005 Kent had the highest number of “unknowns” (6.2%) followed by Sussex (5.9%) while Surrey had the lowest (1.6%). These figures are important as they mask the true extent of NEETs. Tables 1 and 2 show that across the South East the number of unknowns is only slightly less (approximately 1%) than the number of NEETs, therefore if a large proportion of the unknowns are NEET the true extent of NEETs has been significantly underestimated.

Table 2: Unknowns in the South East: Percentage change between November 2004 and November 2005

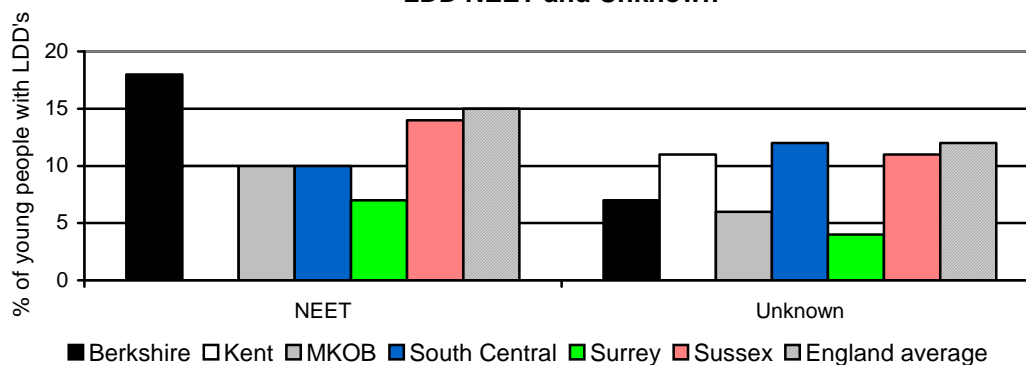
		Nov-04	Nov-05	Difference
South East	%	4.7	4.6	-0.1
Berks	%	4.4	4.1	-0.3
South Central	%	4.4	4.5	0.1
Kent	%	5.8	6.2	0.4
MKOB	%	2.3	3.6	1.3
Surrey	%	2.5	1.6	-0.9
Sussex	%	7.6	5.9	-1.7

Learning Difficulties and Disabilities - Young people with learning difficulties and disabilities have been identified as a group vulnerable to becoming NEET. The number of young people aged 16-19 with LDDs is reported in the MI data. Figure

3 shows the percentage of 16-19 year olds with LDDs that are NEET and Unknown in the South East compared with the England average.

Only one sub-region – Berkshire - has a higher proportion of young people with LDDs (18%) that are NEET than the England average (15%). However, Berkshire has a lower proportion of young people with LDDs that are Unknown (7%) than three of the sub-regions in the South East and the England average (12%).

Figure 3: Percentage of 16-19 year olds with LDD NEET and Unknown



Source: MI data December 2005

4.1.5 NEETs in the two focus regions – Kent & Medway and Berkshire

The analyses which follow allow an in-depth examination of the sub-regional and intra area variations in NEET numbers in Kent & Medway and Berkshire - the two focus areas for this study.

This sub-section begins by examining the statistics for the sub-regions, then looks at some of the reasons why young people are NEET in these areas and finally takes a brief look at some of the projects that are working with NEETs to re-engage them with education, employment and training (EET).

Kent and Medway - Statistical analysis of NEETs

Figure 4: Kent and Medway - Intra-area variations of NEETs

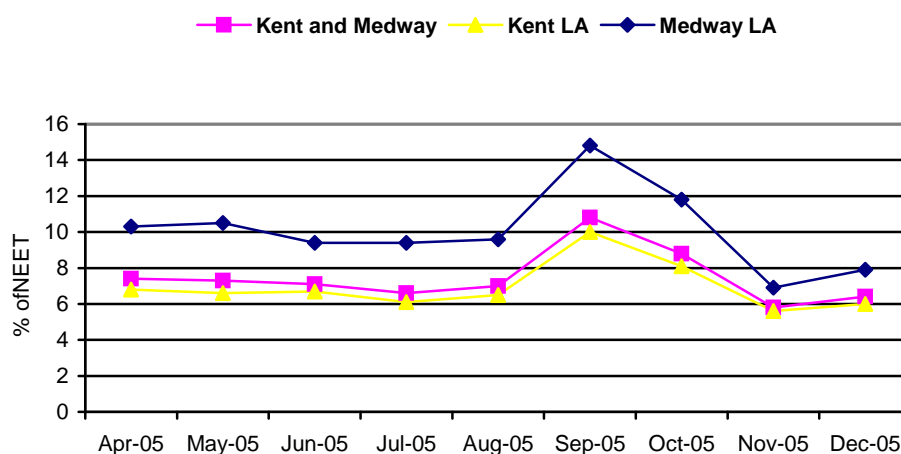
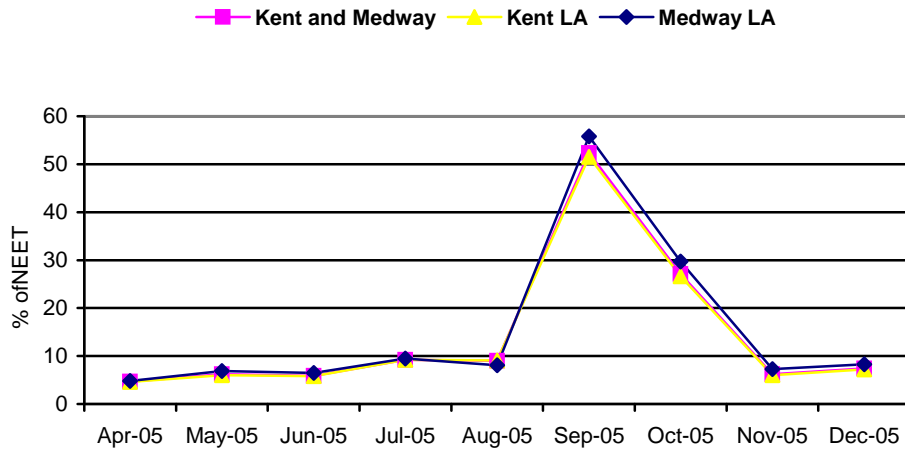


Figure 4 shows a substantial intra area variation in NEET numbers between Kent and Medway. However, the difference is less marked when looking at the data for those whose situation is unknown (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Kent and Medway - Intra-area variations of Unknowns



Berkshire - Statistical analysis of NEETs

Figure 6: Berkshire - Intra-area variations of NEETs

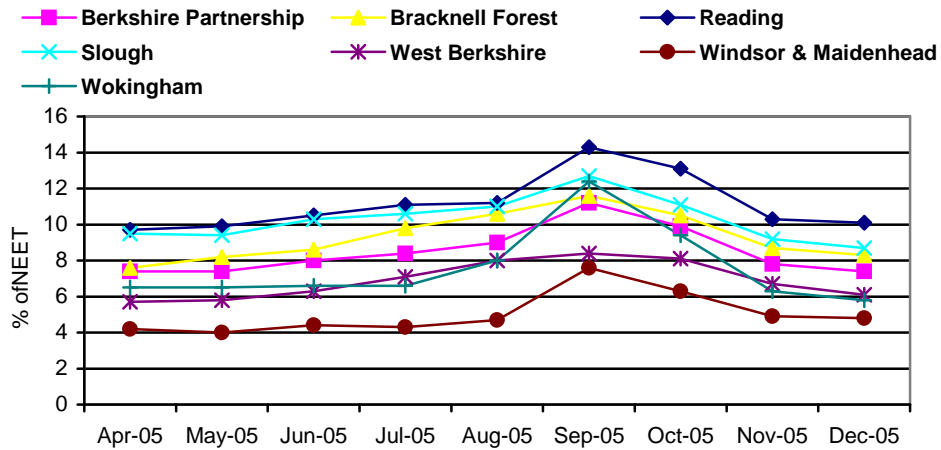
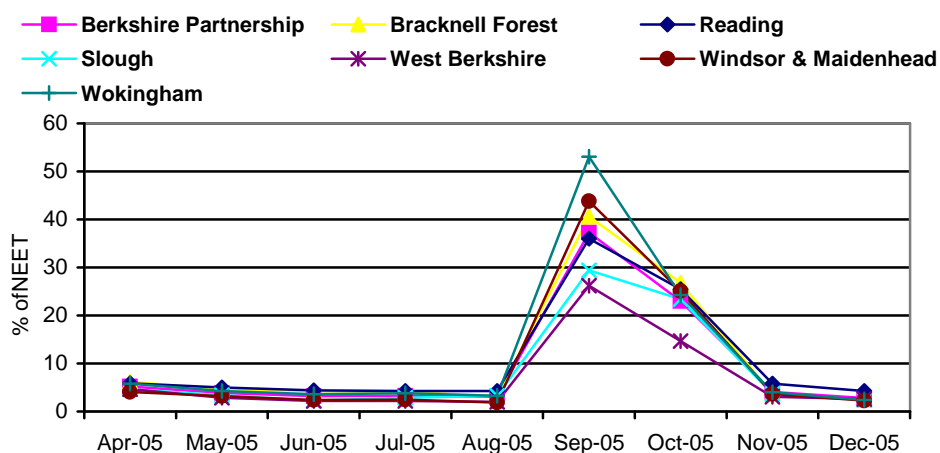


Figure 6 shows a substantial intra area variation in NEET numbers across Berkshire, with Wokingham having the lowest rates and Reading the highest. Figure 7 shows that there is very little intra area variation in the numbers of 16-18 year olds whose situation is unknown for the majority of the year. However, during September there was a difference of nearly 30% between Wokingham (highest rates) and Bracknell (lowest rates.)

Figure 7: Berkshire - Intra-area variations of Unknowns



4.1.6 Causes of young people becoming/remaining NEET in the two focus regions

Kent and Medway's Connexions Business Plan 2005-2006 provides an overview of some of the problems young people in Kent face which may lead some of them to becoming NEET.

- Low-cost housing in parts of Kent and Medway has led to a significant number of agencies and individuals offering foster care. The number of children from other authorities *being looked after by Kent & Medway* is very large and puts a strain on current services. This is supported by the data produced by GOSE in December 2005: only 56% of care leavers in the South East were in Education, Employment or Training (EET). However, they also showed that 68.1% of Kent's care leavers were in EET, 12.1% more than across the region.
- The education system across Kent is selective and *polarised in terms of attainment levels* between schools with outstanding results and those that appear poor because of vastly different intakes at age 11. There appears to be a clear link between schools and post-16 NEET numbers.
- *Extensive reform of the 14-19 curriculum* is currently underway and alternative curriculum schemes are being promoted heavily in schools. However, it will take *time to fully implement* these changes and for their potential to motivate and increase success to show.
- The area that the partnership covers is very large with 145,000 young people aged 13-19 and 4,000 aged 20 -25 with learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD).
- Whilst Kent and Medway has large towns and cities it remains largely rural. A *poor transport infrastructure* is often a barrier to young people's engagement and choice.

Berkshire - As part of their study of NEET provision in Berkshire in 2005, Croll and Davies sent out questionnaires to Connexions Personal Advisors (PAs) to elicit reasons for young people in Berkshire becoming/remaining NEET.

It was clear the PAs dealt with two distinct client groups who required different levels of support and opportunities. The 'Core' advisors dealt with mainstream NEET group and those that require more intensive support to get over personal and family problems were supported by 'Intensive' advisors.

The responses can be categorised into two groups. The 'Core' advisers suggested the largest barrier was the *lack of suitable jobs and training*. However the 'Intensive' advisors believed that *family circumstances and personal characteristics* were the primary reason.

The PAs were asked about the provision they would like to have available to them in order to move their clients into EET. They said they needed more:

- Suitable jobs for 16-18 year olds
- Work focussed training
- Personal development training/help
- Timelines of provision - the need for provision to be available immediately or at least within a time frame that made sense to the clients was emphasised.

As with the responses with regard to barriers, a difference in emphasis was noted between the Core PAs and the PAs supporting young people needing intensive help. The Core PAs tended to concentrate on the need for jobs and were not as much concerned with personal development. The Intensive PAs tended not to mention jobs but saw their clients as needing help with personal problems and personal skills. The two groups were similar, however, in stressing the need for 'work-like' training situations.

Young people in the NEET group were also consulted on the reasons why they thought they were NEET. Two key areas came up:

The experience of school – The young people claimed to have had very unsatisfactory experiences of school. The report identifies two key issues arising from experience at school that contributed to their present situation. First, they had all left with few or no qualifications making it difficult for them to get jobs. Second, their failures in school like situations and poor relationships with teachers resulted in young people having negative perceptions of other further education and training situations which were similar to school.

Jobs and Training – the majority of young people said they wanted jobs. Most were specific about the type of job they wanted. The young people generally recognised that they needed qualifications to get these jobs. Although the desire to get a job was present in all or most of the young people, they lacked a strategy for achieving their objective. Moreover, they lacked an awareness of what else they needed to do in terms of further education to achieve their goal.

The majority of the young people who had previous experience of some form of post school education and training felt that it was not practical enough or relevant to the work place.

It is clear from the literature from both Kent and Medway, and Berkshire, that although the importance of providing a comprehensive programme of initiatives to support the NEET group and those in danger of becoming NEET was recognised there was an understanding that much more is needed to tackle the

issue of NEETs than simply addressing a lack of jobs and education opportunities. Poor housing and difficult social relationships appear to be some of the key causal factors in young people becoming NEET.

4.1.7 NEET prevention and reduction initiatives

Kent and Medway's Connexions Business Plan also sets out some of their targets for tackling the NEET issue. In terms of *NEET prevention* they intend to:

- Further develop their September guarantee initiative that aims to help all 16 year olds arrange a job or course before they leave compulsory education
- Extend the November 16+ destination survey to include 17+ and 18+ to increase the speed of intervention
- The appointment of the pre-14 guidance PAs to schools and vocational centres/consortia is intended to improve motivation and aspiration of young people to achieve at both pre-16 and post-16.

In terms of *NEET reduction* they intend to:

- Continuing to use the bridging programmes – programmes aimed at encouraging NEETs to re-engage with EET (see below).

Examples of NEET reduction initiatives

123 project³

This short course is run over a three-week period and is designed to slowly introduce young people who are NEET into attending a regular course.

The scheme was first piloted in November-December 2004 and was delivered in 8 Connexions Access Points (CAP). Each CAP was asked to identify 10-15 NEETs to take part in the programme. This figure was agreed as the nature of target group meant that larger numbers would be difficult to manage in terms of transport, staffing etc. Also, evidence from previous projects showed that it is more difficult to maintain attendance with a large group.

Outline of course:

Week 1 **1 day induction/meet and greet** - to meet and greet facilitator, PAs and other YP.

Week 2: **2 days focused on team building/confidence building** –entails setting up a contract, course rules, team building exercise/trip and fun day to encourage attendance in week 3.

Week 3: **3 days focused on progression, transition and outcome** – entails visits to training provider/college/large employers, motivational activity and celebrating achievement.

The aim of the activities is threefold:

- to help give the participants more confidence in their abilities
- to help them build relationships with each other

³ Connexions Kent and Medway (2004)

- to encourage them to work individually and as a team.

Outcomes

Initially 60 young people were identified to take part in the 123 programme. Seventy seven percent (46) attended every day and completed the course.

The table below illustrates destinations for all young people who completed the 123 programme.

Table 3: Destinations for young people who complete the 123 project

Number of young people on 123	Employment	E2E	Opps Plus	College	Unemployed	Princes Trust Programme
46	3	11	2	4	23	3
%	%	%	%	%	%	%
100	6.5	23.9	4.3	8.7	50	6.5

The table illustrates that 50% of young people who completed the 123 project have moved out of the NEET group and onto a structured learning outcome.

In addition, evidence from the personal advisers still working with those who are unemployed suggests that after the course the young people felt much more confident to come to the local office and seek advice and guidance from their personal advisers.

Evaluation

The evaluations forms completed by both the participants and the tutors were positive. The only negative point raised by both groups was that the courses were too short. One of the tutors felt that by the end of the course she had built a really strong relationship with the participants and felt that there was a lot more work that could have been achieved. However, evidence from the Opportunity Plus programme (see below) suggests that there is a real danger of losing the interest of the clients if the courses are too long. They concluded that the short, sharp and direct approach was the most effective.

It was clear from the tutor evaluations that they all agreed that the project had a positive impact on the young people. Some of the tutors went into more depth about the exact nature of the positive outcomes, however it was clear that the primary achievement of the programme was to give the young people a chance to start thinking about what they wanted to achieve in the future.

Opportunity Plus⁴

Opportunity Plus is a two-week motivational and confidence-building course. Its main aim is to engage with young people in the 16 – 17 age group who are

⁴ Nicholson, 2005

identified as being NEET and help them move onto a positive outcome. Many young people in this group have limited access to education and training and/or lack awareness of the opportunities available. Furthermore, they often suffer from low self esteem and confidence coupled with a lack of social skills, education and other barriers (i.e. they are young offenders) which have prevented these young people from moving on from their current status. Many of the young people who have been referred to this project were on benefits and this discouraged them from attending the courses for the fear of losing their only source of income. The main target of the project is to engage with 1200 young people throughout the life span of the project countywide and to progress 900 of them into employment, education or a training scheme.

Programme content

The course consists of a variety of activities designed to help the clients gain more confidence, social skills and teamwork skills. It also provides advice and guidance on how to take the next steps into employment education or training.⁵

Outcomes

Between April 2004 and March 2005 a total of 298 people have been recruited onto the course (234 finished the course). 65% were male, 35% were female and 3% were from ethnic minorities. Over 50% of the young people on the course had left school with little or no academic achievement of which 36% were male and 14% female. However, if those who claimed not to know what previous qualifications they had achieved (17.3%) also fall into this category the figure would rise. (This data is based on the information given by the young people at the start of the course.)

The following table shows the progression of those taking the course. 79% progressed into either a course or a job. This gives an indication of the hard outcomes achieved by the programme.

Table 4 Destinations of beneficiaries from Opportunity Plus

Destination Routes	Beneficiary Numbers	% of total
Back to school	3	1%
College	24	8%
Entry to Employment (E2E)	61	20%
E2E now on FMA	1	0.3%
E2E/E2E Enhancement	25	8%
E2E/E2E Enhancement/Essential Skills	9	3%
E2E/East Kent Building Trade School (EKBTS)	3	1%
E2E/Essential Skills	17	6%

⁵ See appendix 3 for a list of activities undertaken by the project undertaken by the project and the desired outcomes

Employment	12	4%
ESF Essential Skills	5	2%
FMA in Health Care	2	1%
Horizon Project	1	0.3%
Impact	30	10%
No Progression	10	3%
PTV	10	3%
Referred to E2E	16	5%
Referred to EKBT	1	0.3%
Referred to Essential Skills	6	2%
Referred to Impact	1	0.3%
Referred to KEY NVQ	2	1%
Thanet Action Group (TAG)	4	1%
Destination Unknown	55	18%
Total	298	100%

The project evaluation also included analysis of the soft outcomes of the project. The distance travelled by the participants was measured by analysing the evaluation forms in terms of improvement in confidence, motivation levels and self-development. A substantial increase was shown in all three.

Positive Activities for Young People- Kent and Medway

Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP) provides a range of activities and experiences across Kent and Medway for vulnerable young people. The aim of the projects is to offer young people diversionary activities to reduce the risk of them offending and give them the opportunity to develop new skills and gain from new experiences.

PAYP projects are aimed at young people aged between 14-17, who have offended or are at risk of offending and who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET. The activities are run by a wide variety of providers (public, private and voluntary) across the region. Activities include DJ workshops, water sports and educational activities.

No data was available on the impacts achieved by this project.

Projects funded by the European Social Fund

A number of projects aimed at preventing NEETs and re-engaging NEETs into EET operating in Kent and Medway are funded by the European Social Fund. A list of these projects together with brief details of activities undertaken is presented in Appendix 3. Evaluation reports for these projects were not available.

Berkshire

E2E

Croll and Davies' (2005) report looked into the provision that was available for NEET young people in Berkshire. They noted that the "core" provision for the NEET group is E2E and gathered the perspectives of a wide variety of stakeholders on E2E provision including colleagues in Connexions and the LSC. It was clear that E2E and similar programmes are considered an extremely valuable resource for young people. However, it was clear that E2E provision was not suitable for everyone in the NEET group.

Almost all the providers thought that the PAs who referred young people to E2E provision were expecting too much of it. Consequently they were receiving young people who were not ready for what the E2E programmes offered. On the other hand, a number of the personal advisors appeared to be reluctant to refer certain young people onto E2E because they saw it as too big a step and were worried about the consequences of the individual failing the course. The authors concluded that:

"If these perceptions are accurate it is apparent that young people in the NEET group are not being referred to E2E because they are thought not to be ready but that even so young people who are not ready are coming on the programmes. This suggests a considerable gap in provision of opportunities that could be a link or stepping stone from where the young people are to the requirements of E2E."

Other provision

In addition to E2E, Croll and Davies identified a variety of other projects/organisations operating across Berkshire that provided support and training for the NEET group. The following descriptions are taken from their report *Provision for Young People not in Employment, Education and Training (NEET)*.

NRG Bracknell Forest

This project is aimed at young people aged between 16-24. Its objective is to raise self-esteem and confidence through art, music and IT, in order to move the young people towards employment. The project identified motivation work and the reality of holding down a job as key issues. The project workers felt that they were able to engage and retain young people because of consistency of provision by staff.

JAC Wokingham, Woodley

This project works with 14 to 21 year olds and offers a range of approaches to engage the target group, including detached, outreach, residential and alternative curriculum. The project also hopes to engage with the at risk groups in years 7, 8 and 9, in the future to assist with NEET prevention work.

The project works on a range of issues including emotional literacy, anger management, raising self-esteem and conflict resolution.

The project identified that the pattern of behaviour and attitudes that are evident in the NEETs can be traced back to years 10 and 11.

The project works with the individuals on a long-term basis and claims to be able to retain the trust of young people being targeted by this provision.

Theale Green Youth Project, West Berkshire

This project is based at a Community School and has 2 main schemes for engaging 13 to 19 year olds. The first, BUZZ, is a scheme that initially engages with the young people. The second, their detached scheme, works with the target group in the community. The project reported between 600/700 contacts per month. 33% of these contacts were with the 16 – 18 age group and of that 10% were likely to be NEETs, many of which are known to be second-generation NEETs.

The project focuses on low self-esteem, fear of failure and peer pressure. It also addresses the issue of lack of understanding of what is available, by the target group.

The Crystal Step up Project, Central Reading youth Provision

The project works with African young people and supports Basic and Life Skills programmes. It is multi media based and allows the young people to tell part or their entire life story through a range of mediums. The successful outcome of the project is the personalised CD created by the participant.

The project targets the hard to reach young people. Although referrals are made directly to the project, some work is also done by youth workers in the communities to raise awareness of the work.

The main issue for most females is childcare while for males it is peer pressure and the non-monetary return of the project. The project view is that future success of the project could be secured through affordable childcare and an end of project bonus.

The Slough Young Peoples Centres, Slough

The project has three elements:

1. Information and Advice. (Housing etc.)
2. Arts and Cultural Opportunities (Art Academy)
3. Training and Business Set (TEAM Princes Trust – Radio station etc.)

The Project regards poor academic results and low confidence as the reasons for NEETs failing to take up training or employment. Lack of perceived relevance of college courses to real life was one of the reasons for young people dropping out. Young men attending the Centre regard apprenticeships as their way into the job market but there are very few such opportunities in area, the main employment being retail which has a high turn over of young people.

The Project Leader regarded Performing Arts as a way of engaging NEETs and developing their confidence, thus enabling the young people to move to more structured learning programmes.

Eton Wick and Windsor Manor Youth Centres, Windsor and Maidenhead

The Centre shares its facilities with a number of other groups and offers a range of generic activities. Some focussed work looks at issues relating to job applications.

The project tends to attract only male NEETs. This group is characterised by low levels of concentration, motivation and lack of routine, with a few young people involved in crime and drugs.

A special project – the Motorwise Project - proved popular with young people.

General Observations about the projects

Croll and Davies noted that all the initiatives mentioned above were successfully engaging with NEETs. This is clearly a difficult task and requires committed and motivated staff who are prepared to build a trusting relationship with young people over an extended period of time.

It is clear that the key issues facing NEETs are lack of motivation and behavioural issues, the vast majority of the projects listed included an element of motivation building and social skills training as well as the teaching to improve employability.

Like the Opportunity Plus and 123 programmes in Kent these projects go some way to bridging the gap between being NEET and entering E2E. The courses/programmes help vulnerable young people develop skills which will help them enter the job market or engage with a further education course.

However, it was also noted that there was not much joint working between the projects and they were often unaware of which other projects were operating across the region and what they were doing.

Croll and Davies' report recommends that a central agency should coordinate the projects and also help them acquire the necessary funding. They also recommended that more work needs to be done with young people at school who are at risk of becoming NEET as it is easier to engage with them while they are still in the school system.

4.1.8 Conclusions

This review shows that although the NEET numbers in the South East are significantly lower than in other parts of the country, there are still over 5% of young people aged between 16 and 18 who are NEET. There is also a significant sub-regional and intra-area difference that reflects the relative affluence of the area. For example Surrey, which is the most affluent area in the South East, has the lowest NEET figures. There are also significant intra area variations in the region. These were reflected in the two focus regions of Kent and Medway, and

Berkshire. Former research associates this with the polarisation of attainment levels and varying levels in employment and infrastructure within the sub-regions.

The review also suggests that young people who are NEET can be classified into two groups who have different needs. The core group who require support and encouragement to apply for courses and jobs and some help developing their confidence and self-esteem. The intensive group have more deep rooted personal problems and require a great deal more assistance to overcome these issues.

There is a substantial amount of work being done across the South East to tackle the NEET issue. From the analysis of some of the projects operating in Kent and Medway and Berkshire a number of patterns and shared issues and concerns have come to light:

- **The majority of the work appears to concentrate on helping young people who are NEET to re-engage with the system, rather than preventing them becoming NEET in the first place. Research work done in Berkshire noted that it is much easier to engage with young people whilst they are still in the education system.**
- **There seems to be little co-ordination between the projects.**
- **E2E courses are not always suitable for young people who are NEET, as they require the participants to have fairly well developed levels of confidence and self esteem - characteristics many people in this group lack.**
- **There is a growing number of short courses and programmes that aim to help NEETS re-engage, however, there is some debate about how long these courses should last and what they should include. Furthermore, many of these programmes operate independently of each other. If a more joined up approach was taken to this vital provision it may be possible to overcome some of the capacity and funding issues.**
- **Evidence suggests that for these courses to be successful it is important that there is a high staff/client ratio.**
- **There is a clear demand for ‘work-like training’, where the participants can clearly see how training situations can equip them for real-life work environments and improve their employability and job readiness.**

4.2 NEETs in Yorkshire and the Humber

4.2.1 Introduction

The Yorkshire and the Humber region is made up of four sub-regions:

- o The Humber
- o North Yorkshire
- o South Yorkshire
- o West Yorkshire

In November 2005 the total number of 16-18 year olds in Yorkshire and the Humber was 184, 905. The average percentage of NEET in the region was 9.3% (16, 244). The percentage of young people who are NEET varies across the region from 4.2% in North Yorkshire to 11.2% in South Yorkshire.⁶

The region is faced with multiple challenges but there is a great deal of disparity across the region in terms of economic prosperity and health and social indicators. This section begins by analysing the distribution of NEETs and the 'Unknowns'⁷ across the region as compared to the average for England. It then goes on to consider this against the factors known to be associated with the NEET phenomenon. An analysis of levels of employment without training is made to shed some light on the concept of NEET churn. Finally, information from four projects/initiatives from across the two focus regions – West Yorkshire and Humber - that work on NEET prevention and/or reduction is presented.

4.2.2 Methodology

The research study focused on two to the sub-regions - Humber and West Yorkshire. Organisations involved in NEET reduction and prevention work in West Yorkshire and the Humber were asked to provide reports and evaluations of projects. Connexions forwarded their Business Plans and Local Management Committee (LMC) delivery plans. Several projects were able to forward project evaluations - these were largely in-house evaluations. Where projects were able to forward statistics of destinations and outcomes of the project, these have been included.

The data for the Yorkshire and Humber region used below came from Connexions Management Information (MI) data unless otherwise stated and was obtained from Government Office for Yorkshire and Humberside (GOYH). Other data was sourced from the DfES and the Office for National Statistics.

4.2.3 Overview of key factors known to influence NEETs

Economic factors

The levels of deprivation and unemployment in Yorkshire and the Humber, appear to vary in line with the levels of NEET. At 5.3 per cent, unemployment

⁶ These figures are based on those adjusted by the Connexions Managements Information (MI) data

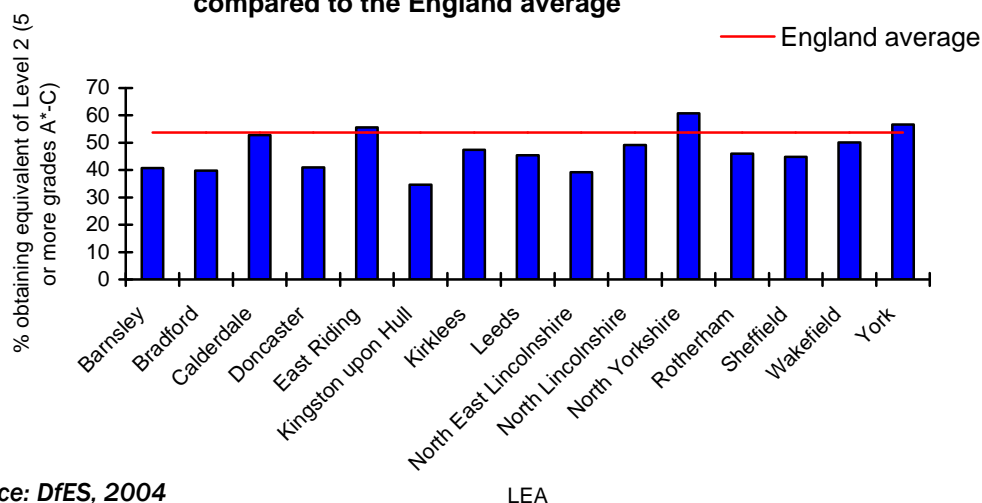
⁷ Young people whose destinations are unknown

rates in the region are above the national average of 5.0%.⁸ There are considerable differences in unemployment rates across the region from 7.5% in Kingston-upon-Hull to just 2.1% in the city of York. Much of the severe deprivation is concentrated within towns and cities such as, Leeds, Bradford, Kirklees (Huddersfield and Dewsbury) in West Yorkshire, Kingston-upon-Hull in the Humber region and Sheffield and Rotherham within South Yorkshire. High levels of deprivation are also found around the former coalfields in the Region - in the districts of Doncaster and Barnsley, in South Yorkshire and Wakefield in West Yorkshire as well as on the coast in North East Lincolnshire (Humber region).⁹

Educational attainment

Poor attainment levels also appear to vary in line with levels of deprivation and consequently the number of NEET in the Yorkshire and Humber region. Twelve out of fifteen of the LEAs in the region fell below the England average of 53.7% for attainment at Level 2 (5 or more grades A*-C). (See figure 8 below). The three LEAs with the lowest attainment rates are Kinston-upon-Hull (34.7%), North East Lincolnshire (39.2%) and Bradford (39.8%). The three LEAs with attainment rates above the England average also fell below the England average for levels of NEET: North Yorkshire (60.7%), York (56.6%) and East Riding (55.6%).

Figure 8: Educational achievement in Yorkshire and Humber compared to the England average



Source: DfES, 2004

4.2.4 Statistical analysis of NEETs in Yorkshire and the Humber region

The following data analysis is based on Connexions Management Information (MI) data for the period November 2004 to December 2005. Data from December 2005 was the most up-to-date available at the time of writing.

NEETs: Figure 9 shows the percentage of NEETs (adjusted) as compared to the average for England for the same period. The proportion of NEETs in the region has consistently remained above the England average. The peak that occurs in

⁸ National Statistics, January 2006

⁹ *ibid.*

September nationally is attributed to the commencement of the academic year and the delay in acquiring destination information for all young people.

Figure 9: Percentage of 16-18 year old NEETs (adjusted)

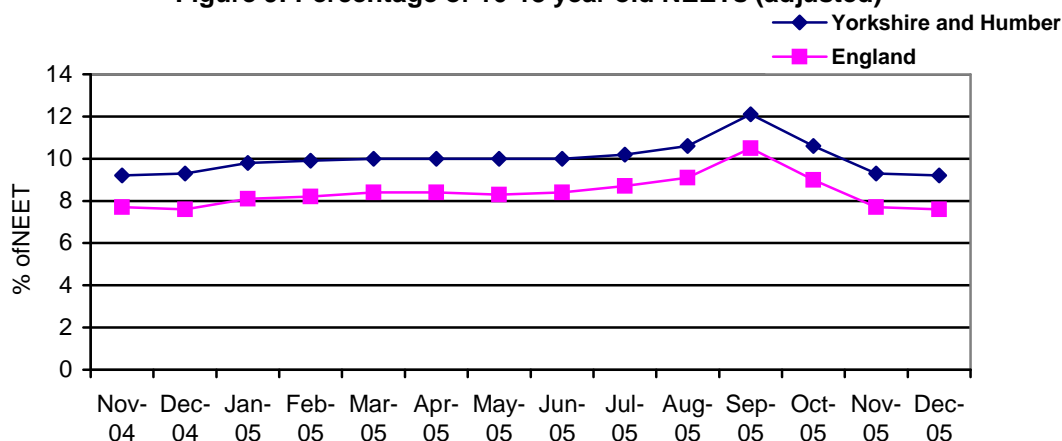
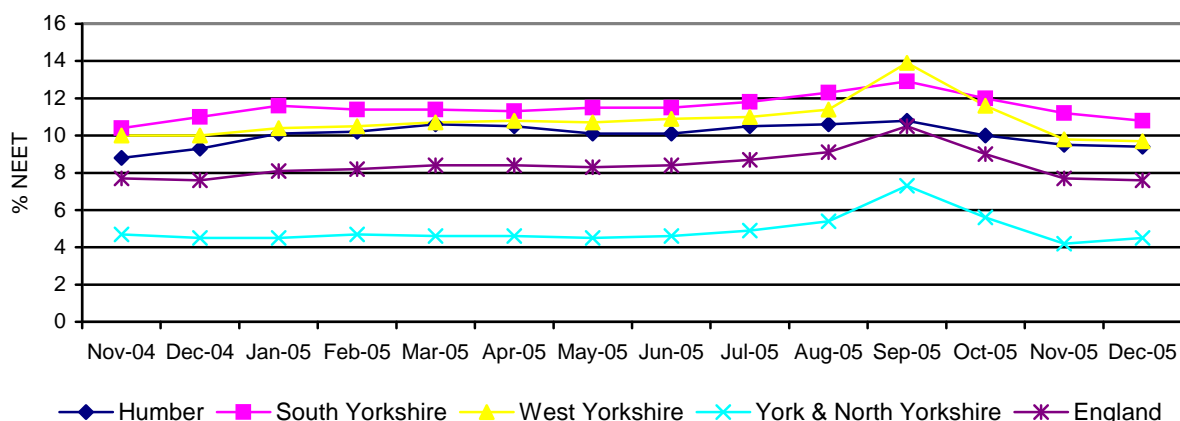


Figure 10 gives a break down of the NEETs by sub-region. The proportions of NEETs for three of the regions (South, West and the Humber) are above the England average. South Yorkshire has the highest proportion of NEETs (other than in September 2005) whilst North Yorkshire has had the lowest during the period, well below the England average. The peak in September was more pronounced in West and North Yorkshire. In West Yorkshire the NEET population exceeded that in South Yorkshire in September, rising from 11% in July to 13.9% in September but its NEET population had decreased considerably by November to 9.8%.

Figure 10: Percentage of 16-18 year old NEETs (adjusted)



A decrease in the percentage of NEETs occurred over the 12-month period between November 2004 and November 2005 in two regions: West Yorkshire and, North Yorkshire. In the Humber and South Yorkshire the percentage of NEETs had increased by 0.7% and 0.8% respectively.

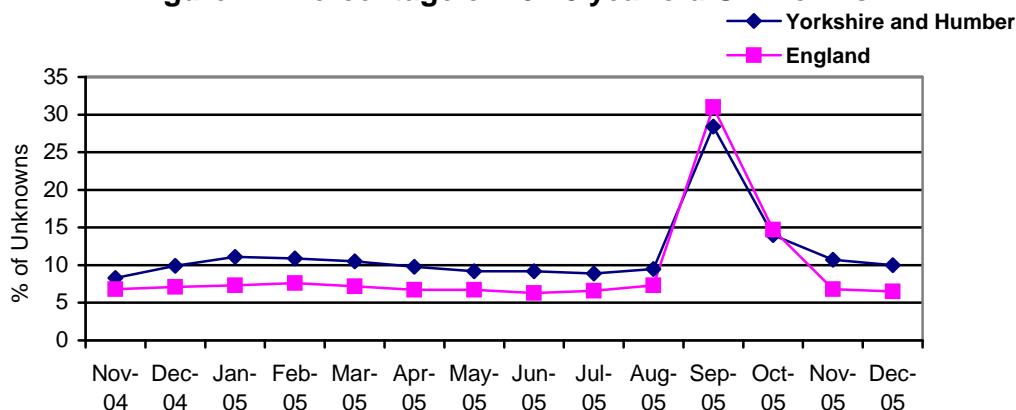
Table 5: NEETs in Yorkshire and the Humber, percentage change between November 2004 and November 2005

		Nov-04	Nov-05	Difference
Humber	%	8.8	9.5	0.7
South Yorkshire	%	10.4	11.2	0.8

West Yorkshire	%	10	9.8	-0.2
North Yorkshire	%	4.7	4.2	-0.5

Unknowns - The proportion of 'Unknowns' in Yorkshire and Humber is higher, at 10%, than the England average of 6.5%. The rate of 'Unknowns' in the region is lower during the peak time in September, at 28%, compared with the England average of 31%. (See figure 11)

Figure 11: Percentage of 16-18 year old Unknowns



The three sub-regions: South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and the Humber are above the England average for Unknowns as well as NEET numbers, whilst North Yorkshire remains below the England average. (See figure 12 below).

Figure 12: Percentage of 16-18 year old Unknowns

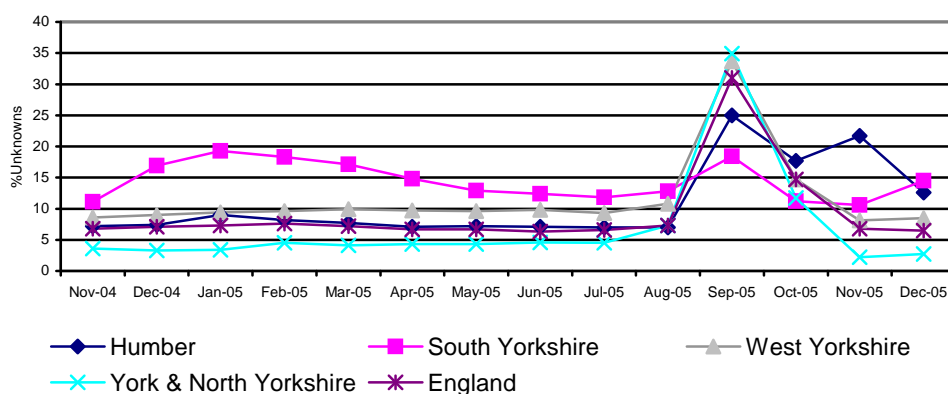


Table 6: Unknowns in Yorkshire and the Humber, percentage change between November 2004 and November 2005

		Nov-04	Nov-05	Difference
Humber	%	7.2	21.7	+14.5
South Yorkshire	%	11.1	10.6	-0.5
West Yorkshire	%	8.6	8.1	-0.5
North Yorkshire	%	3.6	2.2	-1.4

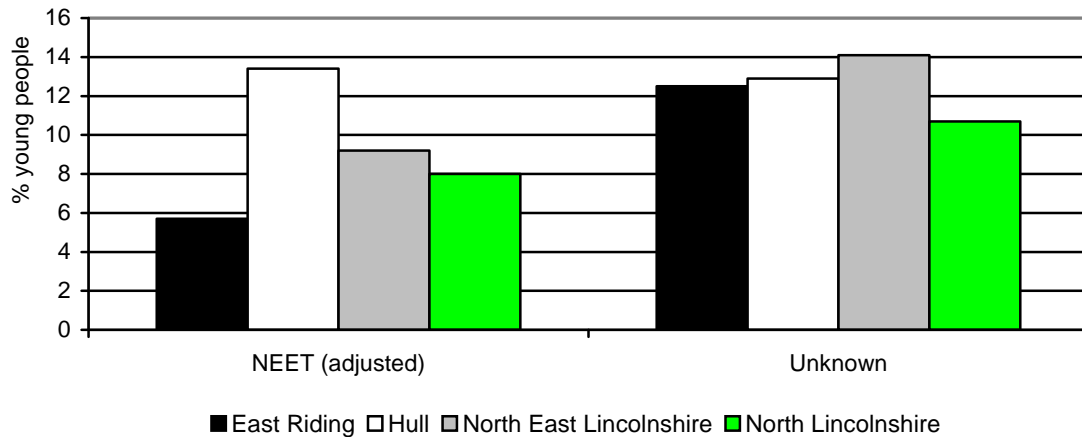
4.2.5 NEETs in the two focus regions – the Humber and West Yorkshire

The following analysis of the NEET and Unknowns in each of these two sub-regions, broken down into their local authority areas shows how the NEET numbers vary.

The Humber

The Humber sub-region covers four unitary authority areas: **East Riding, Kingston-upon-Hull, North East Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire**. Figure 13 below shows that there are considerable disparities of proportions of NEET ranging from 4.6% in East Riding to 11.9% in Hull. There is also disparity between the proportions of Unknowns, ranging from 10.7% in North Lincolnshire to 14.1% in North East Lincolnshire. Whilst the proportion of NEETs was low in the East Riding, the proportion of Unknowns is high at 12.5%.

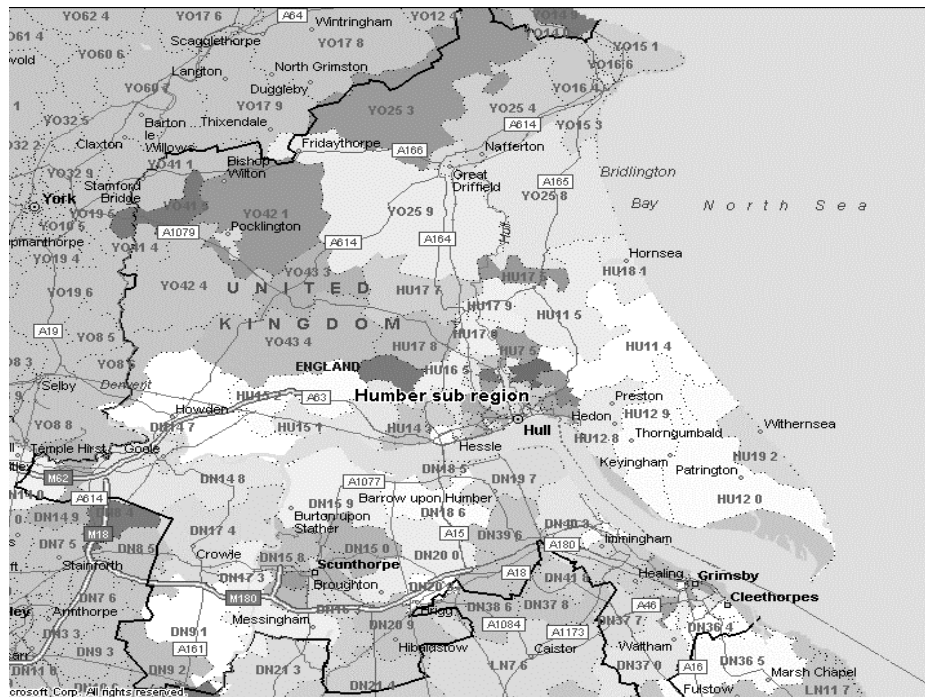
Figure 13: Percentage of NEETs and Unknowns in the Humber sub-region



Source: MI data December 2004

The geographical representation in figure 14 below shows the distribution of NEET young people across the Humber sub region as at November 2004. The most concentrated numbers of NEET (darker in colour) are visible in the urban areas of Hull, Scunthorpe and Grimsby. There are also significant numbers in the less populated areas around Withernsea and Bridlington. These are areas of more marked deprivation.

Figure 14: Representation of the distribution of NEETs in the Humber sub-region

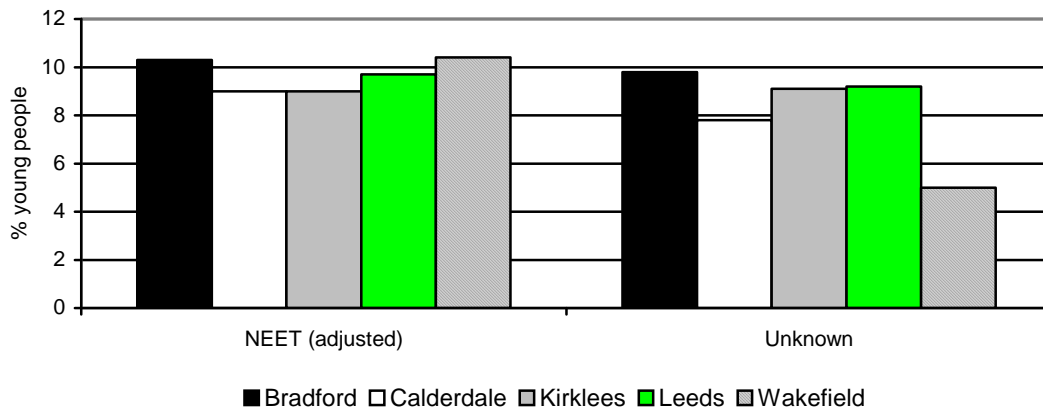


Source: Connexions Humber, 2005a

West Yorkshire

The West Yorkshire sub-region is divided into five metropolitan districts: **Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, and Wakefield**. Figure 15 below shows less variation in the proportions of NEET in West Yorkshire than was visible in the Humber. Wakefield and Bradford have the highest proportion of NEET at 10.4% and 10.3% respectively. Calderdale and Kirklees have the lowest proportion, each with 9%. There is greater variation in the proportion of Unknowns. Wakefield with the highest number of NEETs had considerably fewer Unknowns at just 5% compared with 9.8% in Bradford.

Figure 15: Percentage of NEETs and Unknowns in West Yorkshire



Source: MI data December 2005

Plans for NEETs in the Humber and West Yorkshire

As part of their business plans, Connexions provide information regarding how they plan to improve their service, part of which is to reduce the number of NEETs. Both Partnerships set out their responses to the Every Child Matters (ECM) objectives and highlighted areas for improvement in their Self Assessment process. A consultation exercise with young people in West Yorkshire fed into their delivery plan.¹⁰

Commonly identified areas for improvement:

- o **provision** (WBL, E2E, alternative curriculum, specific services i.e. mental health)
- o **collaborative working** to increase involvement of partners and to avoid duplication, including a demand from young people for greater collaboration between Connexions and schools
- o **marketing and publicity** (for young people and their parents/carers)
- o **information sharing** across partners

In West Yorkshire a number of additional needs were identified:

- o improve the level of employability and skills
- o more coherent provision for young people with LDDs
- o ensure young people can access training when they enter employment
- o challenge stereotypes
- o develop young people's awareness of available education, employment and training and personal development opportunities

Young people in West Yorkshire also identified the following needs:

- o better access to Connexions centres and to PAs or other workers
- o more services and activities, including more evening activities for under 18s

4.2.6 Reasons for NEET

The MI data from Connexions identified four vulnerable groups:

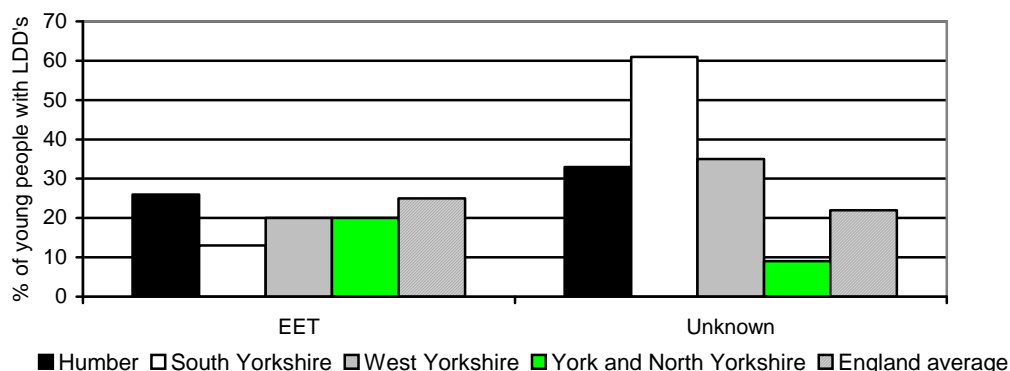
- Teenage mothers
- Young people with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD)
- Care leavers
- Ethnic minorities

Teenage mothers - At 4.7%, the rate of conception for under 18 year olds in the region was higher than the England average of 4.2%. Disparities across the region existed as the rate in Hull was 6.9%, compared to 2.9% in North Yorkshire and the East Riding.¹¹ In figure 16, the MI data shows that the proportion of young mothers entering employment, education and training (EET) in the region is below the England average except in the Humber where it is 1% above the average. The proportion of teenage mothers that are 'Unknown' is well above the England average (22%), particularly in South Yorkshire where it is 61%.

¹⁰ Connexions Humber, 2005a and Connexions West Yorkshire, 2005a

¹¹ Teenage conception rates, National Statistics, 2003

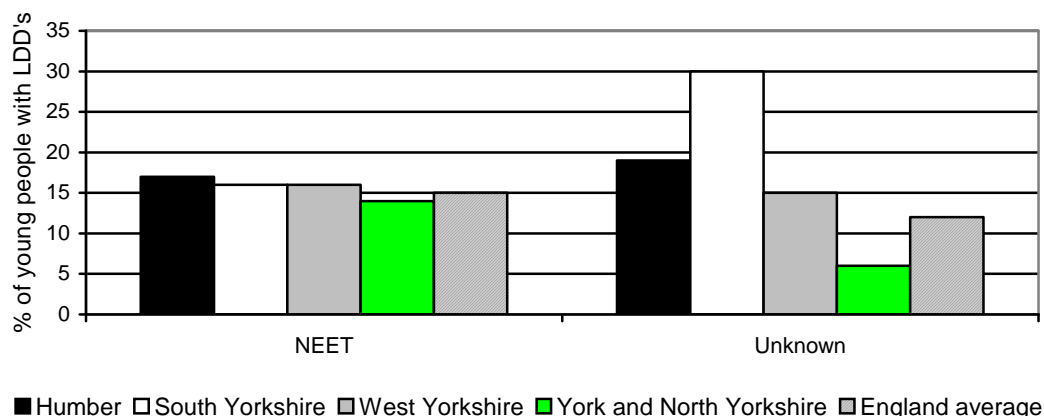
Figure 16: Percentage of teenage mothers EET and Unknown



Source: MI data December 2005

Learning Difficulties and Disabilities - Within the NEET group the number of young people with LDDs does not vary greatly from the England average. However, there are significant differences with the Unknown group. In South Yorkshire the proportion at 30% is well above the England average of 12%. Whilst in North Yorkshire the proportion is only 6%. South Yorkshire had the highest proportion of Unknowns across the whole cohort.

Figure 17: Percentage of 16-19 year olds with LDD NEET and Unknown



Source: MI data December 2005

The region was below the England average (17.%) of pupils with special educational needs (SENs) (including statemented and non-statemented pupils) at just 16.4%. However, in the sub-regions of North and North East Lincolnshire the rate was much higher at 21.9 and 25.4 per cent respectively.¹² These two regions have higher levels of NEET numbers than the England average at 9.2% and 8% respectively, but they are still lower than the average level in the Humber at 9.4%.¹³

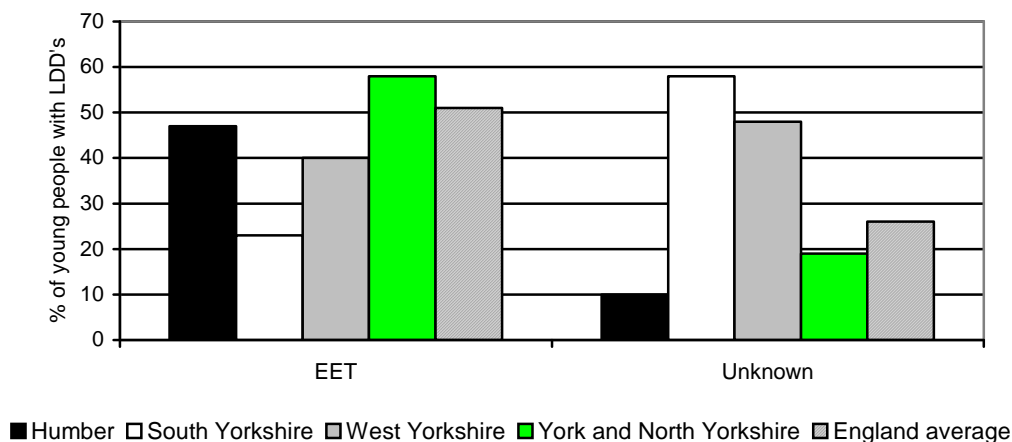
Care leavers – Figure 18 below shows the proportion of 19 year old care leavers entering an activity (becoming EET) and those whose destinations are Unknown.

¹² National Statistics, 2003

¹³ MI data, December 2005

Again the four sub-regions are compared against the England average. The Humber has performed well against the England average in terms of high levels of care leavers going into EET (47%) and lower levels becoming Unknown (10%). Conversely, South Yorkshire has low numbers entering into EET (23%) and higher numbers becoming Unknown (58%).

Figure 18: Percentage of 19 year old care leavers EET and Unknown



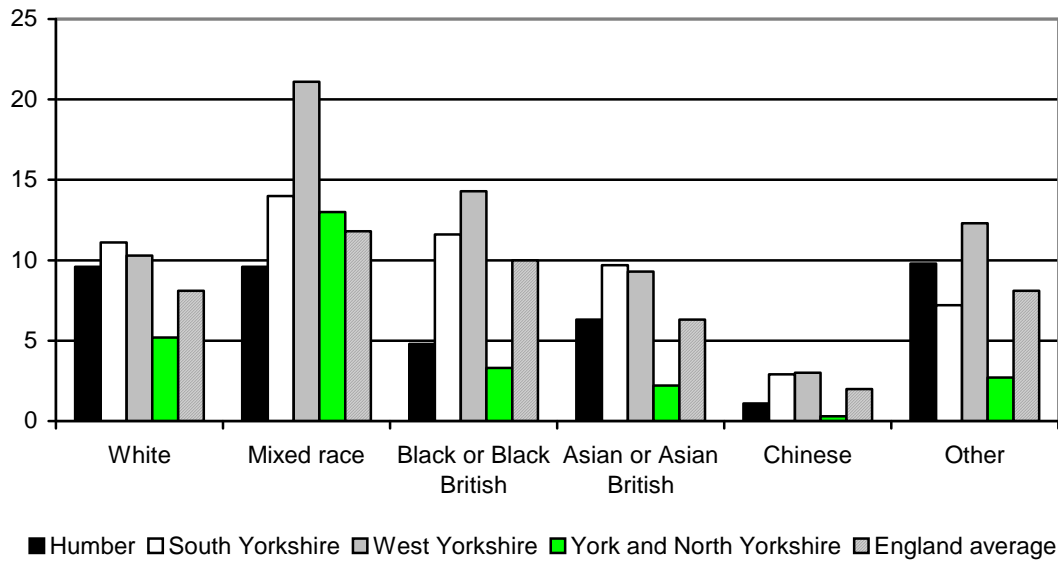
Ethnic minorities - The percentage of the NEET cohort broken down by ethnic group is shown in figure 19 below. This data is considered in conjunction with MI data, which gives the percentage of ethnic minority groups for the 16-18 population as a whole.

The proportion of young people in Yorkshire and the Humber in the total 16-19 cohort that are 'Mixed race' (0.5%) is lower than the England average (2%) yet the proportion of 'Mixed race' 16-19 year olds in the NEET cohort is higher in three of the sub-regions of Yorkshire and the Humber (West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and, North Yorkshire at 21%, 14% and 13% respectively) than the England average of 11.8%.

West Yorkshire also has higher proportions of Black young people and those from 'Other' ethnic groups in the NEET group, compared to the other sub-regions.

In South Yorkshire the proportions of Mixed race, Black and Asian young people in the NEET group are higher than that the England average.

Figure 19: Percentage of 16-19+ cohort NEET (adjusted) by ethnic group



Across the region, the percentage of White young people in the NEET group is above the England average, except in North Yorkshire. As part of its Local Delivery Plan, Bradford identified White working class boys as being at a high risk of underachievement.¹⁴

NEET 'Churn'

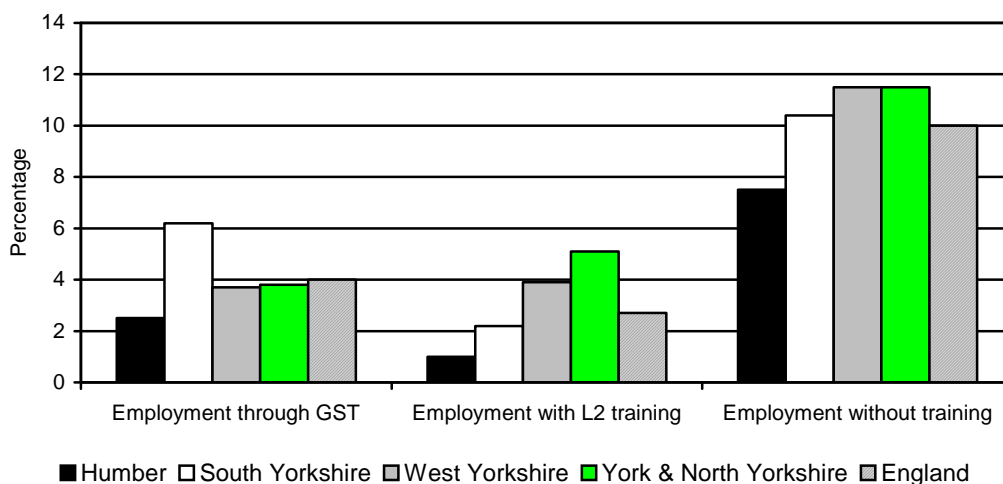
Recent research conducted into the phenomenon of NEET 'churn', attributed much of the 'churn' within the NEET group i.e., those who drift in and out of NEET to those young people who are in *employment without training*.¹⁵

Figure 20 below shows that significantly high numbers of 16-18 year olds are in employment without training, in all of the sub-regions, compared to those whose jobs include training opportunities.

¹⁴ Connexions West Yorkshire, 2005b

¹⁵ Government supported training (GST) and employment with Level 2 (L2) training

Figure 20: Percentage of 16-18 year olds in employment with and without training



4.2.7 NEET prevention and reduction initiatives

Across the region there is extensive work being done in terms of both NEET prevention and reduction. Details are provided below of three projects from across the two focus regions of West Yorkshire and the Humber that tackle NEET prevention and/or reduction. These projects are included here as they were able to provide evidence of success. The introduction of E2V is also included as an emerging practice.

Creative Connexions - Humber¹⁶

Aims and objectives

Creative Connexions was established as part of the Involving Young People Policy and Strategy (2004-2005). The project works with young people aged 13-19.

It aims to:

- use creative and performing arts to explore young peoples creativity, develop their learning and their routes into employment
- advocate and put into practice the use of the arts with young people to develop their creativity, confidence, self esteem, voice, influence and aspirations
- provide the opportunity to develop new and existing skills in the arts and related fields (the activities develop skills which are outlined in the National Curriculum, but this is not a school-based initiative)
- provide access to professionals through website, print and telephone
- develop the Creative and Performing Arts as a tool for young people to influence service development and delivery

¹⁶ Creative Connexions, 2005a and 2005b

- work in cooperation with existing Youth Arts Practitioners and Youth Service networks

The project emphasises *partnership working* and contributes towards more extensive inter-agency activities.

Evidence of success

The project collected feedback from organisations using its services and PAs in order to evaluate how well it was working.

More than half of the organisations which responded rated the project as excellent, the remainder rated it as good or very good. They commented that the strengths of the project stemmed from the ability of the staff to be *flexible, non-judgmental, enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and approachable*. The workers were seen to be in a position to reach young people in ways which appeal to them as they were regarded as having contacts, knowledge and experience to provide quality activities to young people.

The majority of PAs who had received service for their clients from the project had rated it as good, very good or excellent.

The informal approach of the project was identified as a positive element especially as it was also supported by mainstream Connexions services. The project was seen as being able to engage with hard to reach young people who would not be keen to receive support in a formal environment. PAs also noted consequent rise in levels of confidence in young people. Comments included:

...can reengage young people who have or at risk of dropping out of the system, i.e. our NEET clients

Offers an alternative to concentrating on individual issues. The Creative team can offer a range of interests which links into the interests of young people and can help reach the harder to reach as they can be supported and helped without being fully aware that it is happening.

Accessibility to the project was also highlighted, as it was made available to those who lived in rural areas.

Uproject - Humber¹⁷

Aims and objectives

The aim of *Uproject* is to aid transition from secondary school to adult life through a structured programme of activity, advice and guidance in order to encourage participants to remain in education or to take up training or employment. *Uproject* is being delivered through Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP). The project delivers a range of projects and workshops from careers workshops to food and hygiene training, beauty sessions, day trips and residential weekends.

¹⁷ Connexions Humber, 2005b

The target group is the hardest to reach 15-16 year old school leavers identified by school, youth service or other means as having no firm plans for their future - a group with a high risk of becoming NEET.

Evidence of success

The project was delivered in schools with histories of high levels of NEET. It was expected that 60% would become EET but this target was exceeded as 82% (146 out of a total of 178 participants) went on to become EET. Attendance at sessions was said to be high and an improvement on previous years.

The project attributed its success in 2005 to its focused approach and a greater involvement of Connexions PAs in terms of support.

The project emphasised *young people's involvement* in the planning process and the benefit of *recognising achievement*. The scheme included a personal individual development plan, which set targets and milestones for the young person to achieve. All participants received a certificate of attendance as a minimum and had opportunities to gain further accreditation through Youth Achievement Awards, Junior Sports Leaders Awards, First Aid etc.

Many of the beneficiaries were dealing with a multiplicity of complex issues such as offending, bullying, drug addiction, learning difficulties and behavioural problems.

Young people's evaluations of the scheme were positive. Many indicated that as a result, their *confidence had increased*, they had *learnt new skills* and *made new friends*. Other benefits identified by young people included *improved behaviour*, *raised aspirations* and *improved inter-personal skills*.

Effective Transitions – West Yorkshire¹⁸

Aims and objectives

The project was established in January 2004 and is funded by Connexions West Yorkshire and Leeds City Council. In November 2005 the project employed 21 staff of which 13 were PAs based in schools. The PAs are not career advisers and come from a variety of backgrounds. They each have a caseload of 40-50 young people identified as most at risk of becoming NEET but also work with other young people within the school. They continue working with their identified group up until the January after they have left school. Although they work as an integral part of the school, they are independent.

The project has identified the most effective practice from collaboration work with other pastoral and inclusion staff.

Their aims are to:

- undertake systematic assessment of all students' support needs
- develop caseload management systems across the whole school cohort including caseload allocation, case conferencing, communication, referral and progress tracking
- develop internal networks in schools e.g. with pastoral support

¹⁸ igen, 2005

- develop external networks with agencies operating within the school e.g. drug and alcohol advice groups
- involve young people in decision-making processes
- develop a Connexions Access Point which is staffed full time.

The project also has a dedicated a teenage pregnancy PA and transition PAs based in colleges. The college-based PAs take up those young people identified as at risk whilst in school and take up their case management following a phasing in process from the school based PA.

Evidence of success

The project has produced an interim evaluation and was able to provide destination reports for young school leavers. The project target as of November 2005 was to move 75% of school leavers into learning. The project achieved above the stated target, with 79.5% proceeding into learning opportunities. The project also achieved its target of 50% for moving young mothers into learning. The college target of retaining 75% in learning was also exceeded as 81% continued with their education.

The project was able to supply a breakdown of destinations for one of the secondary schools participating in the project. The PA was able to account for all of the previous year's school leavers:

Table 7: Destinations of schools leavers from the Effective transitions project

Destination activity	Percentage of young people
Further education	72.3%
Employment with training	15.6%
Work based learning	1.7%
Employment without training	1.7%
Moved out of contact/ moved out of area	2.6%
Other, including part-time work	1.7%
Unknown	0
NEET	4.3%

In total, ten young people were identified as NEET. The PA was able to report on the circumstances of each of these young people. Two were due to start an E2E course. Two were waiting to start employment pending CRB checks and/or health and safety checks. One was waiting to join the Army and was some way into the process. One was looking for work and one reported that they did not want any further assistance. The remaining four were unable to continue or take up work or training due to 'personal reasons' e.g. illness, pregnancy.

PAs received good feedback from schools, young people and Connexions managers.

[PA] has had very good feedback from school staff as well as from students and their parents. Young people who left school in the summer have come back in to thank her for her support and parents have said that if she had not been involved their son/daughter would be unemployed at this stage.

New Initiatives

Entry to vocational learning

Entry to vocational learning (E2V) is a pilot initiative which has just been established in West Yorkshire. It is targeted at young people aged 16-18 who are identified as NEET. It is a pre E2E programme and is aimed at those who are unable to achieve Level 2. It has been funded by the LSC West Yorkshire's ESF Round 5 Programme

E2V will offer personal development and accredited learning opportunities. It aims to support young people to find out what is available to them with a view to either finding a job, college or further work based training.

As this initiative has just started, its impact will need to be monitored in the coming months.

4.2.8 Conclusions

The Yorkshire and Humber region has a higher than average number of NEETs but it is clear that many areas within the region faced serious and multiple challenges.

- Where NEET numbers were high in the region, this was in accordance with high levels of deprivation and low attainment rates
- The region has a significant problem with identifying the destinations of three of its vulnerable groups. The proportion of Unknowns amongst teenage mothers, young people with LDDs and care leavers were well above the England average for most of the sub-regions. North Yorkshire tended to perform better and the Humber sub-region was an exception in terms of the numbers of 'Unknown' care leavers.
- There are particular challenges for some parts of the region in terms of reducing the numbers of NEET from particular ethnic minority groups. Proportionately greater numbers of young people of Mixed race, Black and Asian young people and White working class young people become NEETs compared with young people from other minority groups, and compared to their numbers in the region.
- There is a recognised need for greater partnership working and young people's involvement. Where these features were in place, it led to improved outcomes for young people.
- There is also a need for wider publicity of Connexions' services and options available to young people looking for education, employment, training and personal development opportunities

Successful projects had a significant impact on the numbers of NEETs. The key features of these initiatives include:

- Involving young people in planning and decision-making
- A focus on raising aspirations and motivation through the use of activities of interest to young people
- Cooperation and partnership working with other practitioners in the field

- **Accessibility and approachability of staff.**

5. Findings

This section details the themes and key issues which have emerged from the fieldwork undertaken in the two LSC regions. The next section discusses the themes and issues which have arisen from the interviews with professionals working with young people who are NEET or are likely to become NEET. The second section looks at the themes which have emerged from the focus group discussion with young people themselves.

5.1 Professionals' views and experiences

The fieldwork in the South East predominantly consisted of semi-structured interviews conducted with eleven key individuals involved in either the practice or policy aspect of the work with NEETs. Nine interviews were carried out face-to-face and two were conducted over the phone. The sample comprised individuals working for Connexions, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), local authorities and service providers. Additionally, participant observation was carried out at the South East Regional NEET task group meeting (attended by 15 professionals working on the NEETs issue in South East).

In Yorkshire and Humber, a total of 14 respondents from Connexions, guidance services, community and voluntary organisations, government office, the LSC and Bradford Confederations, were interviewed on a one-to-one basis. Eight interviews were carried out face-to-face and six over the telephone. In addition, four people who were not available to be interviewed completed electronic questionnaires.

Information was also gathered via two focus groups with regional Connexions teams of 3 individuals each and one with 4 Connexions Chief Executive Officers (CEOs). The majority of the data was collected from individuals in the West Yorkshire and the Humber region since these were the focus areas for this research study. Additionally, two individuals from North Yorkshire and two from South Yorkshire also contributed to the study and two individuals were able to comment on the Yorkshire and Humber region as a whole.

The respondents were asked a series of questions about their perceptions on what causes young people to become NEET, the services they provide, other organisations they work with and their relationships with them, what works to reduce the number of NEETs and what are the barriers to effective provision.

The analysis of the data revealed distinct themes, which look at the nature of NEETs and the issues which impact on NEET reduction and prevention. The findings from the data collected from respondents in South East and Yorkshire & Humber are presented below. Any issues specific to either of the two regions are clearly highlighted.

5.1.1 *The nature of NEETS*

The question focusing on the causes of NEETs led almost all respondents to note that the reasons young people became NEET could only be dealt with after

understanding the nature of NEETs. Respondents believed that NEETs needed to be viewed as a **complex and heterogeneous group** with varying needs and that provision needed to be tailored accordingly. Two distinct groups of NEETs were identified.

- The **Core NEETs** who are more likely to have social and behavioural problems, often coming from troubled and dysfunctional families. This group comprises the '**Generational NEETs**' – young people who come from families where the accepted norm for adults is to be unemployed. The consensus among respondents was that the Core NEETs require intensive and long-term support to overcome their problems and engage with EET.
- The '**Floating NEETs**' who may find themselves lacking direction and motivation have a tendency to move in and out of the NEET group, engaging in seasonal, low paid and sometimes illegal work, or short courses, thus creating **NEET churn**. The respondents felt that helping this group is generally easier, as they tend to require short-term support and encouragement to engage with employment and/or education.

5.1.2 What causes young people to become/remain NEET?

The respondents were asked for their views on the main causes of young people becoming and remaining NEET – particularly in their local area. A wide range of responses were given from which noticeable patterns could be discerned. A number of the respondents struggled to suggest reasons that were particularly relevant for their local area and instead focused on general reasons why young people may become NEET.

The reasons identified by respondents for young people becoming and / or remaining NEET can be categorised into three distinct sets of factors:

- young people centred factors
- systemic factors
- employer-centred factors

Young people centred factors

- **Social and behavioural problems** lead young people to becoming NEET, was the most prevalent response from all respondents regardless of their organisational perspective. These problems were described as being incredibly complex and a fundamental barrier to young people re-engaging with educational, employment and training (EET) opportunities.
- **Negative experience of school** contribute to the majority of young people becoming NEET, was a view shared by nearly all the respondents. This was often associated with **poor attendance** and **low attainment**. Respondents said that these young people leave school before the age of 16, often without any formal qualifications. This experience puts many young people in the NEET group off further engagement with the education system. However, one Personal Adviser (PA) felt that
It doesn't necessarily follow that if they have had poor academic history that this means they will become NEET because some of those who become NEET are really quite bright so that doesn't correlate. (Yorkshire & Humber)

- **Inability to perceive long-term benefits** was seen by many respondents to result in lack of interest in training and education opportunities. One Youth worker noted

They can't see the long-term benefits so they can't be bothered...That's because of short-term mindedness, they don't think that far ahead unless you can work with them for a long time and you can build up trust then they might believe you but that really comes from a long-term commitment. (Yorkshire & Humber).

- **Lack of family support** was seen as key for the core NEET group as these young people require a great deal of support to walk them through all the stages of regularly attending a course or going to work and when it is lacking, young people become entrenched as NEET.
- **Lack of knowledge of the available options and information about how to enter particular vocations** was cited as a key problem in the South East for both types of NEETs and the primary hurdle for young people in the floating NEET group. Young people may:
 - *not have any idea* about the type of career they want to pursue or how to seek careers advice
 - *have vague knowledge* regarding the area they want to work in but are unsure how to find out more information
 - be interested in working in a particular field but lack the information about the *skills or qualifications* they need to get a job in that field or how to gain those skills or qualifications.
- **Lack of self-confidence and self-esteem** was regarded as affecting young people's ability to find out information on different jobs and career paths. Many young people in the NEET group see themselves as failures and as they feel they will not be able to get a good job, they see no point in trying. For others, tasks such as form-filling and attending interviews became insurmountable obstacles.

Many of the people in the NEET group are not aware of the opportunities open to them. Some of them don't have the confidence to go out and look for help from people like Connexions. (Southeast)

Little things can act as a stumbling blocks, from not being able to fill in forms to knowing how to get public transport to an open day. These can stack up against someone and they take the easiest option, which is not to do it (Yorkshire & Humber)

- **Having low aspirations** was reported to be a common feature of NEETs. Young people in communities with high incidence of NEETs did not regard further or higher education as something they could or should aim for. It was also thought to be associated with teenage pregnancy, one of the reasons for young people becoming and remaining NEET.

They often don't think they are capable of doing college (Yorkshire & Humber)

They don't think they can do anything with their lives so they become a mum. It really is something to be socially proud of here...it automatically gives you status (Yorkshire & Humber)

Systemic factors

- **Financial disincentives** as a contributory factor was suggested by a number of respondents in South East, as by enrolling on full-time courses, NEETs lost a significant amount of their benefits. This was cited as a particular problem for those living independently who were reliant on housing benefits.

It is possible for courses aimed at the NEET group to receive accreditation from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) allowing participants to retain their benefits for the duration of the course. However, a number of respondents complained that the accreditation process takes far too long and is overly complicated.

A number of the courses/programmes offer participants small amounts of money for attending. However, this is considerably less than what they receive while on benefits. There was also significant concern over the forthcoming implementation of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and the effect this would have on the NEET group.

One Youth worker noted that incentives could be better used to encourage NEETs into EET opportunities.

I think if they turned it around in terms of incentives, so that if you got a house because you were taking part in a training course etc, that would have a huge impact. The reward is for the wrong thing. (Yorkshire & Humber)

Training allowances and EMAs were also reported to be acting as disincentives for some young people in the Yorkshire and Humber. Many young people wanted to earn money as soon as they were able. For those who took up training allowances but worked alongside colleagues who were being paid more for doing the same job, found this discouraging. They were also reported to be disincentive for young people leaving care to enter training since the training allowance provided was less than the leaving care allowance.

A lot of kids just want a job, they don't want to get just get 40 quid when they could be working and getting more. I think with leaving care kids, they get more than the training allowance pays so where's the motivation there? (Yorkshire & Humber)

- **Patchy knowledge among advisers of financial support available** for 16-19 year olds engaged in education and conflicting advice leads to confusion and deters young people from engaging with further education options.

Employer-centred factors

- **Lack of incentive for employers** – some respondents noted that many employers were reluctant to employ young people without qualifications and/or experience, as they were often seen as a liability and expensive to train. Employers were said to prefer to recruit older people because of the bureaucracy involved in providing 16-18 year olds with training in the absence of incentives compared to those available for employing 18+ through the New Deal scheme. This posed a significant problem for those seeking work or work placements at age 16 and 17. Furthermore, respondents noted that in recent years a number of government incentives for employers to recruit and train young people had been removed or reduced.
- **Having too high expectations of young people** - Advisers reported difficulty in finding employer placements for E2E and E2V as employers had too high expectations of the type of employee they wanted in their work place. Employers were also put off because they were not prepared for (or willing to provide) the level of support needed by young people on E2E and E2V.
- **Insufficient knowledge among employers of vocational qualifications** – Respondents noted that many employers, especially SMEs lack sufficient knowledge about vocational qualifications and how they compare with traditional qualifications such as GCSEs and tend to prefer applicants who have the latter.
- **Recruiting from local and established networks** such as family and friends, was reported to be a common practice among SMEs and young people not linked to these networks, including individuals from families with long histories of unemployment, were, therefore, regarded to be at a disadvantage.

In terms of employment there may be less employers in those area. Often these are small employers and they recruit from their own sources so the kid on the estate isn't going to be employed, it's often families or friends that get it sorted. But if your family have been unemployed for some time they just do not have those networks. (Yorkshire & Humber)

- **Lengthy application procedures** especially for jobs requiring disclosure were disheartening to young people, according to some respondents. It was especially a problem for those who had required intensive support to build up their confidence to complete the application forms in the first place.

5.1.3 What causes sub-regional variations in NEET numbers?

Respondents were asked to comment on the possible reasons underpinning sub-regional variations in NEETs in the Southeast and Yorkshire & Humber regions. The range of views expressed has been grouped into social and environmental factors. These were seen to either directly contribute to or exacerbate NEET numbers in particular areas.

Social factors

- **Economic decline** resulting from closure of traditional industries which had supported successive generations within families, leading to shortage of jobs, in certain areas across the Yorkshire and Humber region, was seen as adding to NEET numbers in these areas.

Respondents in Kent reported that a decline in many of the heavy industries had dramatically reduced the number of jobs that many of the young people in the NEET group had traditionally relied on. The Berkshire respondents attributed the problem to a decline in the retail industry.

Maidstone has many similarities with some of the northern mill towns, when the dockyard closed the main source of employment for the area was gone. This is still having a significant impact, a generation on. The dockyards used to offer apprenticeships. There is now a severe lack of modern apprenticeships and a culture of not working has developed in some families where the children have never seen their parents going out to work.(South East)

- **Lack of suitable jobs** for 16 to 19 year olds in certain areas were seen to exacerbate the NEET issue. In Berkshire, a large proportion of the available jobs in the area were being created in the High-Tec industries requiring a highly skilled and qualified work force, not suitable to young school-leavers.

If you do get a young person to be job ready and there are no jobs there can be such disappointment and they feel knocked back. Working again with someone like that is so much harder because their expectations have been let down. For some it's worse that not starting with them in the first place (Yorkshire & Humber)

In many parts of the Yorkshire & the Humber region, work was said to be largely temporary, seasonal and unreliable, offering no training and no security. Young people came in and out of work, thus contributing to NEET churn. In some areas there was a tradition of casual 'cash in hand' employment.

In one region of Yorkshire & Humber, the proliferation of temporary work had resulted in an increase in the number of migrant workers from the new member states of the EU. Migrant workers working through recruitment agencies and for low wages were also seen to have led to a reduction in the number of vacancies available to young people.

- **The cultural norm of unemployment** was viewed as being present in deprived communities where NEET numbers are high. In some areas in Yorkshire and Humber, there was third and even fourth generation unemployment and a 'perpetuating cycle' of NEET through the generations was common. One youth worker commented that it was difficult to reduce the number of NEET below a certain level in these areas. A deep-rooted sense of 'why bother?' and an endemic sense in the community of low aspiration made working

with this group hard, as the work done by initiatives in the day was likely to become unravelled within the home and community environment at night.

You can get a whole row of houses where no one has a job so nobody bothers and it is the norm to do that, no matter how much you preach during the day or in a youth centre you know they go home back to that environment. (Yorkshire & Humber)

Even parents say, what is the point of going to school? (Yorkshire & Humber)

- **Stigmatisation of communities** where deprivation levels were high and investment was low, were regarded as leading to demoralisation among young people who became NEET on leaving school.
- **Discrimination** – Some respondents in Yorkshire and Humber reported that some employers were known to discriminate against those living in deprived areas, identifying them by their postcode. They were also reluctant to employ those who had learning disabilities and difficulties or were under supervision of the Youth Offending Team (YOT).
- **Absence of role models within family and community** was also raised as key by several respondents who commented that if young people have not been used to seeing family members regularly going out to work or college then it is hard for them to get into such a routine. One respondent noted that:

...a culture of not working has developed in some families where the children have never seen their parents going out to work. (South East).

it is an old mining area and therefore doesn't have a history of academic achievement (Yorkshire & Humber).

In addition, one project workers noted that in deprived communities, the young achievers moved out to seek opportunities elsewhere, and to disassociate themselves from the negative reputations that some communities and towns had. This led to an absence of visible role models for NEETs.

'You tend to have a catch 22 then that you can't get out of, you have low attainment, high levels of deprivation that makes the area more unattractive, which increases the population shift towards more popular areas.' (Yorkshire & Humber)

- **Absence of a sense of mobility** was an issue of particular concern to young people living in rural parts of Kent, as they are isolated in small and, often, very deprived communities and lack the confidence to look for opportunities outside of their local area.

In some towns in Yorkshire and Humber, respondents noted that it was the norm for many young people to stay in their hometown and/or their own community to find jobs rather than to travel to other towns to look for jobs.

Environmental factors

- **Poor public transport** was seen by respondents as a major contributory factor to NEET numbers as it becomes a hurdle for young people in the rural and coastal areas (in Kent and East Riding) who were unable to access opportunities that were on offer in large towns. Others noted that many employers in the area (Berkshire and Humber) had located themselves in out of town business parks without good transport links making them inaccessible to young people who lacked own transport.

This was also an issue for those living in isolated and/or large suburban housing estates as they needed to take numerous buses to get to work on the 'other side of town.' This was particularly a problem in areas where local industries had closed.

Their geographical isolation is also a barrier because the jobs are on the other side of the city. So if they got a job in a factory that started at 7 o'clock they would have to get up at 4.30 just to catch all the buses to get there (Yorkshire & Humber)

Good practice – Yorkshire and the Humber

In some rural areas in region, attempts had been made to redress this problem with the introduction of a mobile Personal Adviser service and a programme called *Wheels to Work*, which offers short-term scooter loans and driving lessons to help young, unemployed and disadvantaged people get into work.

- **Lack of housing** - In the Humber, homelessness was seen as a particular problem, with housing issues affecting a third of the NEET group. Respondents from this sub-region saw housing as a key problem that had to be resolved before they could tackle the NEET issue.

Housing in Hull is a big problem for the NEET group and until you get someone a roof over their head you are not going to get them out of NEET because that is not their priority. (Yorkshire & Humber)

5.1.4 Issues which impact on NEET prevention and reduction

Respondents were then asked to comment on, based on their experience and knowledge, what helps and hinders the prevention of young people becoming NEET and the reduction in NEET number. The 'catalysts' and the 'obstacles' which contribute to NEET prevention and NEET reduction are presented separately, followed by overarching factors which are seen as having an impact on both. Factors which have an impact on both NEET prevention and NEET reduction are presented after this section.

5.1.4.1 NEET prevention – what can act as an obstacle?

- **Privileging of traditional qualifications over vocational qualifications –** Although schools and colleges were offering vocational programmes, some of the school sixth forms, in one town in Yorkshire & Humber, were regarded as attaching more importance to the traditional route of Level 3 courses despite the increasing demand for Level 2 vocational courses.

'Some of the sixth forms are set up as if it is 1965.' (Yorkshire & Humber)

There was praise for the new pre-16 vocational courses that were introduced. Yet, it was felt that they were failing to get recognition as viable alternatives to 'traditional' qualifications from both employers and FE providers. One Connexions Partnership, in Yorkshire & Humber gave an example of a FE provider which was rejecting pre-16 vocational qualifications in favour of GCSEs.

Case study – Yorkshire & Humber

Young people followed a construction course pre-16 and then applied to the local college for FE construction type courses. The college received more applications than they had places for and consequently decided to use different standards in terms of academic achievement in order to determine entry. This left out quite a lot of young people that had done the pre-16 course. Hundreds were without a place.

That really does damage the aspirations of young people.

5.1.4.2 NEET prevention – what can act as a catalyst?

- **Provision of alternative curriculum** -There was a clear consensus amongst all the respondents that the traditional academic pathway through the education system does not suit all young people and often leads less academic students to disengage with the system altogether. Providing an alternative curriculum for these young people is therefore seen as critical in preventing them from becoming NEET in the future. One respondent commented:

As a society we don't provide them with the right education, they need a more stimulating environment to learn in. We are also asking them to stay on beyond 15 which many of them don't want to do, unless we can engage with them in Year 9 they are likely to disengage altogether. (South East)

The interviews with representatives from colleges, local authorities and Connexions in South East revealed a number of schemes designed to provide alternative curriculum for 14-16 year olds who were at risk of disengaging. All the schemes:

- entail taking those at risk of failing at GCSE level, out of school for between 1 and 4 days a week to complete a vocational course at college.
- aim to ensure that the participants remain at school for at least one day a week to allow them to take lessons in core subjects such as English and Maths and receive pastoral support from the school.

- recognise that these young people who are in danger of becoming NEET often suffer from complex social problems and incorporate additional support in the programmes/course to assist pupils with personal and social development.

Good practice – South East

A provider was able to use additional funding to employ a support mentor to work closely with the young people on the alternative curriculum programme. As well as assisting the students with their work he provides pastoral support and is someone they can talk to and raise issues about the course etc. This has proved to be very successful as the mentor is able to build up a good relationship with the participants so that when issues come up which may threaten their continued attendance he is in an excellent position to engage with the that young person and hopefully help resolve any issues.

- **Availability of short courses** was noted by respondents from Connexions in South East, to enable young people in danger of becoming NEET to build their self-esteem and confidence as well as informing them about their options.

Good practice – South East (Kent)

The Positive Activities project focuses on young people who are in danger of becoming NEET – such as people who have been excluded from school and young offenders. The program is aimed at young people between 14 and 18. The focus of a lot of the activities is to enable young people to have fun and their aim is to divert them away from criminal activities. All the young people on the programmes are also linked with PAs. There is an emphasis on focussing on future aspirations and goals and linking them back into education and training. It is predominantly a motivational programme. Most of the activities happen during school holidays, but there is also provision during school time for those who have been excluded or are on part time timetables.

- **Arranging placements** – A few respondents in South East also referred to the increasing effort being made to ensure that young people have a course or job arranged before they leave school.

Good practice – South East

Medway council is currently setting up a September Guarantee initiative and a common application form. This project aims to ensure that by the time young people leave school in July they have a guaranteed course in the following September and have simplified the process of applying for course.

In addition the council also runs a help-line when GCSE and A-level results come out to provide advice and guidance to young people and their parents.

These projects/initiatives go some way to helping prevent young people entering the NEET group when they leave compulsory education. However, it is recognised that many young people in the NEET group do not finish compulsory education and therefore will not benefit from such a scheme.

5.1.4.3 **NEET reduction – what can act as an obstacle?**

- **Narrow range and inappropriate provision** - Some respondents noted that although a large number of course were available, the range of provision was too narrow for those with intensive support needs, there were insufficient courses which led to jobs in the local labour market and more specifically, there was a lack of ‘appropriate’ provision for some NEETs – at a suitable aptitude level and/or with adequate support attached to the provision. This resulted in demotivation among young people and contributed to NEET churn as young people came in and out of a succession of inappropriate learning opportunities. Advice workers attributed drop out from learning and skills opportunities to young people entering the ‘wrong’ type of provision. They noted that levels of self-esteem and motivation dropped each time a young person began a course and failed or dropped out.

Once you have had a young person fail twice on a course you won't get them to sign up for another one because they feel like a failure and you have burnt the potential outcome before too long. That is the kind of person that ends up joining the cyclical mess of generational unemployment. (Yorkshire & Humber)

- **Lack of flexibility in provision** across all types of education and training opportunities resulted in young people missing out on course start dates. In particular, there was call for more roll-on roll-off courses across the board that did not rely on one cycle of entry so that young people did not have to wait for long periods to begin courses, or enrol on other less suitable courses in their stead.
- **Making clear links between attendance on courses and potential outcomes** - Advisers believed that enabling a young person to understand the benefit of a course would contribute to the likelihood of that person remaining on a course and having a positive outcome at the end.

Its better to tell them early rather than letting them train up and then find out, get disappointed and demotivated. (Yorkshire & Humber)

- **Gaps in provision** – The respondents commented that there was a gap in terms of base level provision, especially at pre E2E level for those young people who were not ready for E2E courses.

Emerging practice – West Yorkshire

The West Yorkshire region has been chosen as a pilot area for a programme of Entry to Vocational Learning (E2V). The programme intends to offer personal development and accredited learning opportunities in order to support young people to explore what the world of work is about with a view to either finding a job, college or further work based training, including Entry to Employment (E2E).

- **Concerns with Education to Employment (E2E) provision** -The core provision available to 16-19 year olds in the NEET group is E2E. Although all of the

respondents agreed that it was a useful and valuable provision, they also noted that it was:

- *not suitable* for everyone in the NEET group, as participants are expected to have basic skills and the ability to work independently on course work, in order to get onto an E2E course.

Good practice – South East

A few E2E brokerage/enhancement schemes have been set with extra funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) and LSC to give extra support to participants on E2E.

Two of the respondents referred to this as being an extremely useful resource and one described the counselling available through the scheme as a “big hit” and that there was a lot of demand for this extra support.

However, this additional funding was in short supply and did not provide suitable provision for the NEETs with the most complex needs.

- *insufficient to meet demand* which led to disappointment and demotivation among agencies and young people within the hardest to reach group.

‘Partnerships were led to believe that this [E2E] would be the answer but when they had motivated young people only to find there was no provision available, young people become demotivated and it is harder to re-motivate these people and they have gone forever.’ (Yorkshire & Humber)

- *restricted to those most likely to complete the programme* and as a result excluded the ‘Core’ NEETs.
- *failed to take local needs into consideration* as Local Authorities had received equal numbers of E2E programmes, and the numbers of NEET was not taken into account in allocating resources to each LEA

‘Anyone with half a brain could see that [town name] didn’t need a E2E programme at all really and [town name] needed one that was 5 times the size of everywhere else. It’s a bizarre idea of fairness (Yorkshire & Humber)

- *replaced some much-needed pre-E2E provision*, such as basic life skills, which led to young people who could not access E2E also missing out on training which could have prepared them for E2E in the future.

- **Lack of responsiveness of FE provision to the needs of the local labour market** - A concern expressed by some in the Yorkshire and Humber region was the failure of FE provision to be responsive to the demands of local employment markets. There was either an insufficient range or complete absence of courses leading to qualifications relevant to growing industries. Instead there was a surplus of places available on courses which did not prepare young people for jobs that were available.

‘There is no need to train 2000 hairdressers because there is no need for more hairdressers locally we need to target provision so that people can gain employment.’ (Yorkshire & Humber)

Case study – Yorkshire & Humber

In one town, there had been massive investment in the construction industry with large-scale regeneration taking place. Yet, there were no construction or joinery vocational courses available. As a result local young people were losing out and industry had to recruit from outside the area.

- **Lack of suitable progression routes** in terms of jobs/courses for participants who have completed E2E or other courses designed for the NEET group, was also seen by many respondents as a key issue. Several respondents commented that the problem was that there were a number of fragmented courses which did not necessarily lead to employment, instead of clear progression routes which NEETs could follow. The poor experiences of NEETs at school also led them to question the usefulness of a series of courses unless it is clear to the participants how the course/programme will help them get a job.
- **Lack of provision for those with additional needs** - One provider in Yorkshire and Humber commented that there was a lack of additional needs provision for those aged 16 to 18. As a result, young people aged 16 and 17 with additional needs fell through a gap in provision. At 16 they were no longer eligible for a service from Children’s Services and Adult Services could not pick them up until they reached 18.

5.1.4.4 NEET reduction – what can act as a catalyst?

- **Short Motivational Courses** - Representatives from both Berkshire and Kent Connexions stated that short motivational courses to re-engage young people with EET have been a great success. Both the projects in Kent and Berkshire reported excellent rates of participants moving into positive destinations (leaving the NEET group), of between 70-90%.

Good practice – South East

The 123 project in Kent entails a similar structure and activities as projects run in Berkshire. Further details about the activities undertaken during this short course are provided in chapter 3.

Key challenges for the 123 project and similar initiatives across the South East include:

- Providing the right combination of personal development activities and fun team /confidence building activities to keep them engaged and to ensure that participants learn useful transferable skills
 - Providing a high staff participant ratio to enable PAs to build up strong work relationships with the participants for further development work after the course.
 - Persuading young people to sign up in the first place by providing transport and some form of financial incentive for turning up.
 - Treating the participants as adults while addressing challenging behaviour.
- **Experience in the work place** included as an element of FE provision was seen as essential, to encourage young people to engage with available provision. Respondents felt that this would give young people the confidence that engagement with such provision would then enable them to access job opportunities.

5.1.5 Overarching factors affecting NEET reduction and NEET prevention

A number of themes emerged from the interviews with respondents in the two regions which appeared to apply equally to the success or failure of NEET prevention and NEET reduction initiatives. These are presented under the headings of partnership; management, sharing, ownership and use of data on NEETs, provision of support, targets on NEETs and sustainability of funding. These themes and associated issues are presented below.

5.1.5.1 Partnership

Majority of the respondents from both regions were of the view that their organisation alone could not tackle the NEET problem and that the most effective initiatives/policies involved working together with other organisations. While the Connexions service had the primary responsibility for tackling the NEETs issue, it did so in partnership with a range of organisations including LSC, Youth Offending Team, Social Services, schools, local colleges, voluntary and community organisations.

- **Flexibility** was regarded by a number of respondents as key to good partnerships. Respondents felt that flexibility was needed to address the different agendas of the range of partners involved in working with NEETs and to be responsive to the changing NEET population.

Good things have come out of the formal partnerships.... However, it is essential that the partnerships remain fairly flexible and can respond to the needs of young people. (South East)

- **'Owning' the NEET issue** – Respondents from Connexions Partnerships in the Yorkshire and Humber region reported being at different stages of a process of encouraging partners to take up collective responsibility for NEETs in their region. The value of 'owning NEETs' and taking on collective responsibility for young people who were NEET or at risk of becoming NEET was seen as key by

respondents from across the Yorkshire and Humber region. There was general agreement that where this was happening, this was having a significant impact on reducing the numbers of NEET.

Emerging practice – Yorkshire & Humber

Much of the success was reported within schools and included schools rethinking their Level 1 and 2 provision and adopting the destination of their young people as a measurement against themselves. One region had gone from a point where learning providers were unfamiliar with the term NEET to a point where local schools were requesting regular reports on the numbers of NEETs.

Some heads are even asking for weekly reports now. I asked for a target of a reduction of 25% last year, there was concern that this would not be popular but since there has been such a positive response to this sense of sharing there was not a problem and we reached the target (Yorkshire & Humber)

- **Formal partnerships** - Strategic or formal partnerships tended to exist between statutory agencies and between Connexions Partnerships and their contracted agencies. Local Management Committees (LMCs) gave partners a channel to try to influence provision and discuss issues as they arose. Members of the voluntary sector also sat on the LMCs.

In Yorkshire & Humber, partnerships between all agencies were said to have improved in terms of sharing ownership and responsibility of NEETs although it was felt that there was still some scope for improvement, as there was a multitude of strategic meetings that partners were required to attend. Furthermore, the voluntary sector representatives were not always able to be present given their limited staffing and resources.

- **Informal partnerships** were common at ground level among community-based organisations and statutory organisations. Informal relationships varied from *sharing resources* such as minibuses to *ad hoc sessions to discuss individuals' needs*. There were no formal agreements or contracts in terms of how professionals should work with each other but such partnerships were reported to be successful because of the respect amongst colleagues and led to benefits for the young people involved.

'There has been such a depth of relationship on this estate between the organisations that work here...the personal relationship between the project and the school are years old so the level of mutual need and respect is such that a contract would be irrelevant. That strength of understanding...is one of the reasons for the success of the work we do and the impact on the young people we both work with.' (Yorkshire & Humber)

Informal partnerships allowed workers to keep up to date with issues affecting a young person, especially as many young people who were NEET or at risk of NEET were in contact with numerous agencies and professionals. Several organisations maintained that being in close contact, either

geographically or through regular visits facilitated the flow of information and reassured young people that they were receiving 'joined-up' support.

'If young people do not think we are working together then young people will play one off against another and they do this on a frequent basis. So we try very hard to make sure they see that we do.' (Yorkshire & Humber)

Good practice - Yorkshire & Humber

In a school the Connexions Access Point had been located in the same corridor as the pastoral support. This facilitated contact between all the workers. Staff would see and speak to each other regularly. It allowed young people to be aware of the joined up working.

There is a lot of contact between ...the people who work with individuals [young people] for the benefit of the young people

- **Partnership with industry/ employers** - In Berkshire, a number of comments were made about the importance of working in partnership with industry and some of the difficulties of getting employers involved. A key concern was the number of different organisations trying to engage with the same employers. There appeared to be a lot of support for increasing the amount of partnership working with industry and the setting up of formal guidelines and practices.

Majority of the respondents from Yorkshire & Humber noted that partnership with employers had not yet been developed but they considered such partnerships necessary for improving opportunities and for changing the perceptions of young people. Another issue raised by a guidance company was that partners that had a long history of working in the youth sector, did not appreciate the benefit of input from commercial enterprises.

Good practice - South East

Berkshire Connexions, in partnership with the LSC, had employed two learning advisors to liaise with local employers and talk to them about training young people. Although the project had finished six months ago the rewards of a better working relationship with local employers were still being reaped.

Good practice - Yorkshire and Humber

As part of the Scrutiny Commission in South Yorkshire, the Chamber of Commerce was invited to attend. This enabled them to discuss opportunities available for young people and how employers could be encouraged to take on young people.

Case study - Yorkshire & Humber

A call centre training unit employing large numbers of young people provided young people with Personal Development Opportunities (PDOs) but were a missing partner much of the time because they were not traditionally seen as holding an interest in young people.

- **Partnerships with young people** - A number of respondents commented that it was vital to work in partnerships with young people. Connexions regularly engage with young people through their youth board. Kent and Medway Connexions noted that it was very important that the Youth Board was representative and didn't only include "the young people who always volunteer for such activities." At present they have two young people who are NEET on the board.

Partnerships with young people were reported to be effective ways of:

- engaging young people in activities
- strengthening ability to identify needs
- encouraging participation in service delivery
- recognising achievement

Good practice – Yorkshire & Humber

In the region, young people are involved in the design of Connexions Access Points and identifying subjects for group discussions. Young people are also actively encouraged to take part in their own personal development programmes. One Connexions Partnership reported that the assessment, planning, implementation and review (APIR) framework tool had been useful in encouraging young people to identify their needs and expectations. The tool also enabled them to see how far they had progressed.

- **Partnerships with parents and families** - Many of the respondents in Yorkshire & Humber noted the limited amount of support available for NEET young people from their parents and families and of their low aspirations. The respondents felt that there was a need to engage parents and to raise their aspirations in order to improve the current situation. Community based projects often dealt with several members of the same family and were aware of the history of families and communities, which could impact on young people participating in these projects.

5.1.5.2 Management, sharing, ownership and use of data on NEETs

All of the respondents reported that data on NEETs was vital to providing effective provision.

- **Data collection and management by Connexions** - Connexions have primary responsibility for collecting and managing data on the number of NEETs. This data is based on information Connexions receive from schools on their leavers.

Respondents in South East noted that other organisations that offer provision for NEET young people collected their own data, which is fed into the Connexions database. They felt that this policy of data sharing worked well between the large organisations (such as Connexions and Local Authorities).

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Respondents from Yorkshire & Humber noted, however, that there were variations in the way in which data was recorded because of the different databases maintained by local authorities and Connexions' sub-contracting

models. This led to difficulties in terms of comparing data and transferring data across from one system to another.

Emerging practice – Yorkshire & Humber

This issue was being addressed with Connexions partnerships working towards a single database system and it was expected that this would be aligned with the Local Authority system.

- **Data collection by voluntary and community sector organisations** – The respondents in Yorkshire & Humber from these organisations noted that their objectives for data collection were different from that of Connexions and information gathered was processed in a way so that it could not be used to identify an individual.

The objectives included:

- to provide their funders with progress reports, and show levels of engagement and destination outcomes.
- to facilitate consultations with young people while they were using the service and collate evaluation data when they left to review provision and to use as evidence when bidding for further funding.

The voluntary and community sector did not have a statistically accountable tracking system, unless they were working within a Connexions' contract but many had arrangements to determine how many young people left an activity and went into a positive outcome as funders, such as NSF, required this as part of their assessment.

- **Keeping tracking data on NEETs** – the present guidelines require Connexions to track individuals who have recently left the NEET group to monitor their progress. Although respondents from Connexions in South East recognised the importance of their role in tracking people in the NEET group, it was seen as very *resource intensive* as it often involved visiting individuals who did not respond to phone calls or letters. In the past this had taken up a considerable amount of Personal Advisors' (PAs) time.

Variations were reported by Yorkshire & Humber respondents, to occur in tracking procedures. A particular problem was identified in sub-contracting models that were not maintaining regular contact with their NEETs.

Another issue was how sub-contractors were ensuring that NEET clients were actually in the system because you are not a NEET client if you have not been contacted for 3 months, you are unknown but there were significant numbers of young people when we did that evaluation that had not been contacted for 3 months and were still being recorded as NEET (Yorkshire & Humber)

Different methods of tracking were identified by respondents from Yorkshire & Humber. Call centres and door-to-door visits were used in some areas as a

way of contacting individuals who may not be available during normal working hours. These were very resource intensive. One PA had developed their own database to do this and run reports from. However, it was unclear if all of this data was then fed into the central database and accounted for.

Good practice – South East

In Medway the local authority is currently piloting a September Guarantee Initiative, which aims to guarantee a positive destination for all school leavers. The data from this initiative is being fed in to the Connexions database and vice versa, creating a useful tracking system for NEETs, which allows for an element of triangulation.

Emerging practice – Southeast

Connexions are in the process of recruiting trackers to reduce the burden on PAs.

- **Data sharing** – In both regions, *data sharing protocols* were in place with other organisations such as local authorities, LSCs, colleges and schools. Data was shared when community organisations worked under explicit arrangements with Connexions to share data. In these circumstances it was very much the responsibility of Connexions and/or statutory agencies to act on the data.

Several community and voluntary organisations in Yorkshire & Humber were concerned that sharing data would compromise client confidentiality and their independence from statutory agencies. This was seen to cause some frustration amongst Connexions and guidance service staff.

Good practice - Yorkshire & Humber

In one sub-region, a dedicated worker had been appointed on a fixed-term basis to encourage providers to share information and to raise awareness of the importance of sharing their data. This was to ensure that their service could be valued and to record the impact on the NEET group. However, for many organisations, a lack of a tradition of systematically recording data as well as the practical issue of limited resources and facilities to do so meant that implementing any changes proved difficult.

Data was only being used before to go to funders but providers don't know what other agencies are doing, this is something that is blindingly obvious to us but not to them. Without this data we do not know where people are.

One youth worker working in a voluntary organisation in Yorkshire & Humber did recognise the benefit of data sharing and suggested that a compromise about the amount of shared information would be a solution. It was recommended that a protocol of *selective data sharing* could be implemented so that the minimum amount of information could be shared whilst still providing Connexions with information that could minimise the number of unknowns.

'I had a meeting with the Connexions local area managers and they had a map of the distribution of NEETs particularly in [name of area] where we work and I could see from that map that there were young people that were NEET that were not little stars on their map so there are definitely people we pick up that the statutory services are not currently picking up.' (Yorkshire & Humber)

- **Using data to target resources** - Connexions and their sub-contracted companies in Yorkshire & Humber used their data to target resources, although the extent to which this was undertaken varied across the region, in a number of ways:

By mapping NEETs -

- Partnerships identified where NEETs were located geographically. They targeted their resources and deployed their PA's accordingly.
- Local Management Committees used this for strategic planning
- Government Office received 'Risk Scans' from the Supporting Children and Young People's Group (SCYPG) every month, which highlighted these to the Partnerships and worked with them to examine the reasons for significant changes in the data, such as a sudden increase in the number of unknowns.

By identifying vacancies - When a young person left an activity PAs were able to log this as a vacancy and allocate a PA to assist that young person in finding a new activity according to their needs.

Good practice – Yorkshire & Humber

A Partnership in the region identified a concentrated level of need for intensive support in cluster areas across the city. They piloted a scheme of linking PAs to these areas and they worked intensively with a small caseload of long-term NEETs for a period of three months. This had a very good success rate. The Partnership now plans to continue with this method of working by carving the sub-region into smaller areas. Geographically based teams of PAs would have access to more detailed information about the NEET population. It was perceived that this method would increase the efficiency of PA deployment and facilitate the monitoring process.

5.1.5.3 Support – what, how and when

Respondents were asked to comment on what elements of projects were critical in their work with the NEET group. The nature of support given to young people and how and when it was delivered was a recurring theme.

- **Nature of support** – Connexions track all young people from Year 9 onwards. Regular meetings between PAs and schools are used to group pupils according to their risk of becoming NEET. The minimum support group receives basic guidance and support, the majority of which comes from the school rather than Connexions. The intervention group consists of pupils who

seem to be coping reasonably well but may need some intervention to point them in the right direction. This usually involves occasional contact with PAs to ensure they have the right information and know where to go to get help. The intensive group provides a high level of support for those pupils at greatest risk of becoming NEET. They are assigned a PA who will address issues with them as and when they come up. In addition to this there are special needs teams who help statemented and special needs pupils.

Respondents also noted that the support given to NEETs needed to be:

- **Holistic**, especially for young people with multiple or complex needs. This included advice and guidance on life skills as well as practical advice about how to fill in forms, create CVs etc. Respondents felt that it was vital that the response to NEETs was joined up and did not only seek to provide EET for young people but also addressed the complex behavioural and social issues which can lead to some young people re-entering the NEET group again and again.

Good practice – Yorkshire & Humber

A project in the region enlisted the services of 5 PAs each with a specialism, including housing, welfare, additional needs, family support and education and employment. This allowed the project to give young people detailed advice about a particular issue without the need for multiple intervention.

- **Coordinated** to ensure that professionals were working alongside each other in the interest of the young person and information was not lost.
- **Tailored** to ensure that individuals' specific needs such as behavioural problems or housing issues were taken into consideration and specialist guidance was received.
- **Accessible** – Respondents in Yorkshire and Humber emphasised the need for accessible support. Youth projects attributed much of their success to their base in communities and to their adoption of an open door policy. Similarly, school-based PAs worked using open door policy. They were also open during school holidays and did not work to a timetable.

We are open every day so there is someone here every day of the week and every lunch time for information, get help and use the Internet. We are also open during the holidays. It is quite a busy place and I think this has impacted on the outcomes for this year.
(Yorkshire & Humber)

- **Independent** – PAs and youth workers in Yorkshire and Humber attributed their success to their independent status. School-based PAs were seen by young people as independent from the teaching staff and youth workers were seen as independent from statutory services. These respondents believed that young people found them approachable, particularly about sensitive issues.
- **Innovative and inspirational** - Project workers in Yorkshire & Humber emphasised the need to use innovative techniques to inspire and

motivate young people. This was particularly the case when levels of aspiration were low and when young people had not achieved within a formal learning environment.

If you can find something that really motivates that young person, you can then use that as a carrot very effectively to encourage and motivate them to do something that is beneficial for them that they may otherwise not be able to appreciate (Yorkshire & Humber)

Case study & Good practice – Yorkshire & Humber

A young man who had been out of school for 2 ½ years attended a youth project 2 or 3 nights a week. He is now going to college and is training to be a joiner. The project worked with him intensively in the centre and took him on a residential course. A relationship of trust was built between the young man and the youth worker. As a result the youth worker was able to identify what motivated him, his passion was football.

The project now sponsors their football team, which recently won their division. The conditions of sponsorship are that that he and the other team members have to remain in education. Since they all have to stay in education in order for the team to continue, this encourages each other. It costs £15 a week to keep 7 young people in education.

If that was coming from maintenance grant it would cost far more than that and probably wouldn't have the same impact

Good practice – Yorkshire & Humber

Creative Connexions was a project established in response to the need for something different to inspire young people and to build on their motivation levels. The project employs people with specialised creative skills in music, drama and film. Young people are encouraged to explore social issues that may affect them through the media.

Media was chosen not because it was necessarily something that young people had chosen but because it is not linked with formal learning and helps young people think outside of themselves.

- **Provision of support**– Respondents highlighted a number of factors they regarded as central to how support should be provided.
 - *Establishing trust* – PAs in Yorkshire & Humber regarded building rapport and trust with NEETs as being critical to a long-term working relationship with them.
 - *Recognition of small achievements* was seen as important in helping NEETs find their way into education and employment by respondents in both regions.
 - *Supporting young people to make their own decisions* was regarded as the most effective way to tackle the NEET problem. Young people were

much more likely to stay in a job or a course if the decision to apply / enrol was their own rather than that of their parents or PA.

○ **Timing of support**

Early intervention was seen as key to preventing NEETs. A number of respondents commented that it would be helpful if young people at risk of becoming NEET, especially those who were truanting or were likely to be excluded, were identified and supported as soon as possible, rather than delaying intervention until Year 9 as many young people would have become uninterested in education by this time. Early intervention was highly valued by many of the respondents who noted that:

- problems could be dealt with before they developed and became complicated
- a historical relationship precipitated in-depth knowledge of individual circumstances and potential problems
- knowledge of family and community ties and associated issues could be established

One youth project working closely with a local school reported that they worked with young people from an early age, from age 5 upwards.

That has been one of the keys to the successes of our work, long-term relationships, we have historical relationships with young people long before they approach stages of their life and development where they are going to fall into trouble and in terms of the long-term NEET reduction I think that is why we have been quite successful in that. Most places consider long-term a year or two but long-term here is more like five years. (Yorkshire & Humber)

5.1.5.4 Targets on NEETs

NEET prevention and reduction initiatives and programmes are all given performance targets to reach in terms of reducing the NEET population. Although it is recognised that it is important to monitor the outcomes of different initiatives, the method by which the success of initiatives is assessed or evaluated came in for substantial criticism from practitioners and strategic managers.

- **Focus on hard outcomes** – The strong emphasis on linking the success of projects and the allocation of funding to hard outcomes was criticised by respondents. Focusing solely on the number of participants on a programme who moved out of the NEET group and into EET and not giving credit for soft outcomes which are often harder to quantify, was seen as counter-productive.
- **Unrealistic** - The LSC and other funding bodies commonly demanded hard targets. Among youth workers and PAs there was a feeling that hard targets were unrealistic and set young people up to fail. They maintained that for the NEET group soft outcomes such as improvement in personal skills, self-

confidence and motivation were more important to ensure that a young person not only went into a positive activity but also remained in that activity.

It's all very well if you put a course on and you have ten 16 year olds on the course but only three finish the course ... you've wasted 70 per cent of your money but if you had spent, admittedly 3 or 4 times the amount of money in preparing those young people before doing that course by doing some developmental work to build up their personal skills you would probably have had 70 per cent of them complete the course (Yorkshire & Humber)

- **Too many** - Some respondents complained of being held accountable to a large number of targets focusing on different groups of young people. As some of these conflicted, this did not improve the effectiveness of services targeted towards vulnerable young people, such as NEETs or teenage mothers. For instance, the NEET target is one of 14 DfES targets, many of which are linked. The effect of achieving one target, such as reducing the 'Unknowns' and determining the numbers of teenage parents could have a negative effect on the NEET target.

Case-study – Yorkshire & Humber

One manager reported that at the beginning of their post, they were dealing with as many as 28 attainment targets. These had since been reduced to five linked targets, one of which was focused on NEETs.

- **Likely to skew provision** - Those respondents who were responsible for delivering on NEET targets reported a tendency for provision to be targeted on those NEETs that were easier to work with and more likely to move into EET, thus facilitating the achievement of the NEET target. This was at the cost of directing resources towards the 'Core' NEETs who required intensive support over a longer period, without the certainty that the young person would be able to leave the NEET group.

5.1.5.5 Sustainability of funding

All respondents, especially those from the community and voluntary sector, regarded funding as a major concern for tackling the issue of NEETs.

- **Too many funders with small amounts to disburse** - A number of respondents from both regions stated that there were too many funding strands held by numerous organisations, each of which could disburse small amount of money for varying lengths of time. This situation created a complexity of funding options making it difficult for providers to decide whom to apply to for funding. It was often necessary to make multiple bids to a variety of sources and each application required different information, making the process long winded, time consuming and often financially unviable, especially for small voluntary and community organisation working with NEETs.

Some of the other concerns raised about the nature of funding included:

- providers, especially small voluntary and community organisations, faced high levels of uncertainty about where funding would come from one year to the next
- projects were unable to plan for the long-term
- the principle of short-term funding ran counter to interventions that need time to mature and realise hard outcomes
- applying for multiple strands of funding was resource intensive
- given the insecurity that funding necessitated, staff turnover was reported to be high. Staff would leave to join statutory agencies and as a consequence, valuable knowledge and experience of working with NEETs was lost from the voluntary sector.
- Connexions Partnerships valued the work of the community and voluntary sector in building self-esteem and confidence of NEETs. There was concern across the Partnerships that projects currently run by the community and voluntary sector would be lost.

Comments included:

Sometimes the bidding process ends up costing the organisation more than the bid is worth. (South East)

'Every piece of work has 4 or 5 different funding streams.'
(Yorkshire & Humber)

'If you were able to get 5 year funding instead of 2 year funding you already have written in half the amount of work in terms of spending time re-applying and you are not having to change all your administration procedures.' (Yorkshire & Humber)

'At the moment 50 per cent of my time is taken up with trying to find money and that is time that I could spend supporting young people.' (Yorkshire & Humber)

Good practice – Yorkshire & Humber

One Connexions Partnership had funded a Voluntary Youth Organisations Network (VYON), an umbrella organisation to strengthen the standing of the voluntary sector by enabling them to work together.

- **Prescribed funding** – Some respondents noted that the funding is usually tied to the achievement of specific objectives and can only be used to help prescribed groups. For example one respondent mentioned that they had received a grant for E2E enhancement but it could only be used to assist E2E participants aged 16 and 17, when there was a number of 18 year olds on the course who could have benefited from the enhancement programme.

The next section details the findings from the focus group discussions undertaken with young people who are or had been NEETs.

5.2 Young people's views and experiences

5.2.1 Background

A total of thirty-four young people took part in discussions in Yorkshire and Humber (Hull and Brighouse) and the South East (Kent & Medway), organised with the help of local Connexions. In addition, participant observation was carried on an activity day organised by Berkshire Connexions to market their services to the NEET group (attended by 14 young people).

Most of the participants were aged 16 or 17 and had left school last summer or in the summer of 2004.

The participants who took part in the discussions in Hull were on the first day of an induction week that led to Entry to Employment (E2E). Prior to this, four had been in employment since they left school but were not currently in work; three had taken some kind of course at a college or a training provider and six said they had not done anything since they left school. The discussions with this NEET group took the form of one-to-one interviews

At the Brighouse focus group, two of the participants said they had recently secured employment or were on a course. Three of the participants said they had taken a course since they left school but not completed them, one young person had completed an E2E course, another one said they had worked but was not currently in a job and two said they had not done anything since they had left school. The Connexions team had brought young people together from Huddersfield, Bradford, Keighley, Cleckheaton, Dewsbury, Leeds and Rastrick for the focus group.

In Kent & Medway, two of the participants said they were claiming Job Seeker's Allowance, one said they were doing unpaid work experience four days a week and six said they were not doing anything at present. All of these participants were taking part in a three-week programme of events and activities organised by Connexions Kent & Medway to raise their confidence and expand their horizons. In both instances the focus groups worked well because these young people were used to being with each other and were confident about speaking in front of each other.

Given the small number of young people who took part in this study, the extrapolation of findings presented in this section requires care.

5.2.2 What causes young people to become NEET

Variations in aspirations

There was significant variation in the aspirations of young people from the two regions. In Yorkshire and Humber young people were clear in their ambition, stating that they wanted to get a job despite finding it difficult. In the South

East, the majority of the participants were unsure what they wanted to do. When asked what they would prefer to be doing they gave responses such as, *having fun and meeting new people.*

Two were more certain and commented that they would like to be working and one reported that they wanted to go to college.

Degree of readiness to think about the future

Many of the young people from both regions commented that they were now ready to think about their futures and listen to advice as a consequence of developing a more mature attitude. They acknowledged that this was not something they were ready to do when they were at school either because they felt they still had *plenty of time to make up their minds* or because they had been *fed up being told what to do* by teachers and parents.

I left school and thought about doing nothing but it is only now I am a bit older that I am thinking I'm a bit stuck and what am I supposed to do now? I'll find a way around it hopefully.

Several young people said they now realised the value of having qualifications (particularly those young people who had tried working) and wanted to gain skills and qualifications in a recognised trade that would lead to a job.

Negative experiences at school

In both regions young people spoke freely about their time in school. With the exception of two participants in the South East, all had negative experiences of school. In both regions negative feelings engendered by their experience of school were associated with a number of factors

○ *Poor attainment and low sense of achievement*

Failing to attain GCSE's or getting poor results left young people in Yorkshire and Humber with a sense of low achievement. Only one person mentioned that they had gained ASDAN¹⁹ qualifications while at school. Some young people said that, because of their 'lack of achievement' during their time in school, they had not taken their exams because they had left school of their own accord or been excluded before it came to taking the exams.

Young people attributed their low attainment levels to *frequent changes in staff and schools' reliance on supply teachers*. One young person had been placed in the bottom set after having a lot of supply teachers and found schoolwork hard. As a consequence young people felt that they had failed to obtain the grades they had otherwise expected and therefore missed out on opportunities to go on to further or higher education.

There were never any teachers because we were always being taught by supply teachers that were too young and didn't know what they were

¹⁹ Award Scheme Development & Accreditation Network - National Awarding Body for qualifications

doing. I wanted to go to university but I don't think I will get the chance now. (South East)

○ ***Bullying***

Bullying led to a dislike of school, resulting in low attendance. This was common in both regions among those who had been bullied.

It was horrible and I hated it. I used to get beaten up and picked on and that is why I never attended (South East)

Not being listened to by the school added to the impact that the bullies had. Four young people who had been bullied and had complained to school staff complained that the school failed to act.

School would have been better if they had separated the bullied from the bullies. I was put into classes with pupils who were bullying me and school did not take any action when my parents complained (Yorkshire and Humber)

○ ***Poor relationships with teachers***

Participants described a number of ways in which poor personal relations with teachers had been key to their negative feelings about school. One participant made the following observation that was echoed by other young people:

To get on in school it was important to be able to get on with the teachers (Yorkshire and Humber)

On the whole participants said they resented being *treated like little kids* by teachers once they got into the middle years in school. Several participants said they reached the point where they were fed up being treated badly by teachers and that by Year 10 they could not be bothered to go to school. Truancy and low attendance at school was said by several students to be due to poor relationships with teachers

One young person complained of being unfairly singled out by a teacher as soon as they started secondary school because of an incident between the teacher and this individual's older sibling.

○ ***Lack of support from teachers and school***

Participants from both regions commented that when they asked teachers for help this was often too late in coming, especially during lesson time. It was also a problem for individuals with learning needs who had literacy and writing problems. This clearly had frustrated them and had contributed to their disengagement from school and education.

The young people commented that they had received less support at school of the type they were now accessing from Personal Advisers and Careers Advisers in Connexions offices.

- *Poor classroom management*

This was an issue for young people in the South East. Teachers had not dealt with disruptive pupils effectively and as a result the rest of the class had found it difficult to concentrate. One individual added that their teacher had relied on the use of textbooks, a method that did not retain their concentration.

- *Difficult transition to secondary school*

The change to secondary school was made more difficult for many young people in the South East by what they perceived to be a stricter attitude and less support from teachers. They said they felt they had to challenge what they considered to be petty rules and compared it to their positive experiences of primary school where they said the teachers were more relaxed and had time to help them.

- *Exclusion and truancy*

Several participants in the Yorkshire and Humber reported they had been excluded at some point whilst at school. This was because of poor behaviour, some indicated that they had a problem with authority.

Truancy was reported by young people from both regions. This was due to a general dislike of school and/or teachers. In the South East some individuals truanted rather than attend lessons that they did not like.

5.2.3 What causes young people to remain NEET

Prior experience of education

The main barrier to enrolling at a college was the fear of it being like school. They associated all situations that involved learning with their negative experiences of school.

As a result many young people did not make applications to colleges and said they would prefer to work instead.

We would rather have a job than go back into learning

Two participants did not enrol at school because they feared they would meet up with the people who had bullied them at school. One of the Hull participants said that a bully they had encountered at school was on the induction course they had started that morning.

Lack of suitable qualifications

Some young people who wanted to attend particular courses at college found that they lacked the right qualifications to be able to do so.

Influence of peers

Influence of peers could have a negative effect. A few young people were put off from applying to college because their friends had told them that they were bored.

Inefficacy of financial incentives

Most participants were aware of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). Although they felt that it was a good idea to get paid to learn, the majority did not consider it sufficiently enticing to enrol at a college.

After you pay bus fares and things, there wasn't much left over for books so most of the time I had to borrow from my mates (South East)

Some participants voiced reservations about having to attend college every day in order to qualify for the weekly payment. This aspect clearly put some of them off the idea of EMAs.

The only participant who said that EMA would have made a difference applied and was told they did not qualify because their parental income exceeded the threshold for triggering the payment.

Negative experiences of participation in FE or training

A few young people commented on negative experiences they had in FE. The circumstances described were very different. Two young people failed to engage with their courses and as a result were either forced to leave or left of their own accord. Another completed a course but was not advised whether they had gained a qualification nor had guidance of what they could do next.

Lack of support from family

Participants said that their relationships with their families were the main thing they would like to improve in order to better their current situation.

Barriers to entering the labour market

○ Age

Age was reported to be a common barrier for young people in both regions. Their experience was that employers and certain sectors set a minimum age of 18 for a lot of jobs and required experience, which they did not have. One young person wanted to work in the travel industry but had been advised that the minimum age was 19. Other jobs required driving licences and they had to wait till they were 17 to be able to do so, one participant from the Hull group said they had passed an exam to work for British Gas but could not take the job up until they were 17 because they needed a driving licence.

○ Finding work placements

One individual had spent a year on a construction course but left because they could not find a work placement for the second year of the course.

- *Lack of suitable jobs in the local area*

In the Yorkshire and Humber region, the employment market was on the whole described as poor. Jobs for young people aged 16 and 17 were hard to find and tended to be low paid. One young person had been made redundant from a factory job and was finding it difficult to find a replacement job with a comparable wage.

In the South East local jobs were not attractive and the range was minimal. Local jobs were described as *fillers* and not something they wanted to do long term as a career. One young person mentioned that they really wanted an office junior's job but these were only available if they were prepared to work in London and the travelling put them off.

- *Problems with the application process*

Not receiving acknowledgement of their application or feedback, as to why their applications had been unsuccessful, from employers frustrated many young people. These young people felt disappointed and were demotivated and did not feel like they were really getting anywhere. Some of the participants said that their PAs had made follow-up calls to employers to find out how applications were progressing but did not fare any better with employers than the young person had. The experience reinforced the negative feelings they already held about themselves.

Hanging around waiting for replies to application forms makes me feel that I am talking to a brick wall

Applying for jobs is not getting me anywhere

I don't like making applications when nothing happens

- *Employers preferring qualifications over experience*

A few young people said they had gained practical skills from working but had no qualifications to prove it. One of them had worked with a family member fitting kitchens and another worked for a caravan company making furniture, but had been laid off. They both said they had come onto the E2E course so they could gain qualifications and then get back into a job.

5.2.4 What enables young people to leave the NEET group?

Role played by the Connexions Personal Advisors

- *Provision of support*

The majority of young people described the support received from PAs as invaluable and compared it favourably to the support they had received from school and family. The PAs were able to help them with support when they needed it.

Many found it useful to discuss their feelings of frustration with their PAs. They indicated that they had good relationships with their Connexions Personal Advisors and viewed the staff at Connexions as accessible.

○ *Source of Careers and training advice*

The participants said they were using Connexions as well as informal sources such as friends and family to keep in touch with the job market. Most of the participants at the Hull focus groups had arrived on the induction course as a direct result of Connexions. Some of the young people said that their PAs tried to keep things moving for them so *things don't grind to a halt*.

Support from parents and family

Perceptions of support from parents and family varied. Some participants said that parents had pushed them into action while others said that they had been nagged or coerced into getting a job.

My mum was on my back to get a job and she kept saying that she hadn't got enough money to support me

My mum kept moaning at me and telling me to hurry up and get a job. I felt as though I was being forced into it and I didn't feel quite ready

Peer influence

Some young people said they were motivated to go to college because their friends had got jobs or were in training and as a consequence, they had found themselves on their own during the day.

Positive experiences in a learning environment

Positive experiences were associated with attendance at vocational courses and those that were held in an informal learning environment.

One individual had gained a certificate in food hygiene and felt that the course had been useful as well as enjoyable. Another was on a course with the Prince's Trust and liked it because it was *laid back* and a very different learning environment to school. The Hull participants had just commenced the induction week of E2E and were optimistic about future jobs. In almost every case, participants said they expected to be in a reasonably well-paid job with the next year.

At the activity day in South East, it was observed that young people enjoyed participating in an informal setting. However, they could only maintain their concentration for short periods.

The next chapter draws together the conclusions for each LSC region and also presents the overarching conclusions and implications emerging from this study.

6. Conclusions and implications

This chapter begins by identifying the salient issues which emerged from the review of statistical and other information gathered from each region, and the field work undertaken in each of the two LSC regions focused on in this study.

It is followed by a section which brings together all the evidence gathered in this study including the review of material from the two regions and elsewhere in the country and from the interviews conducted with professionals and young people for this study to enable possible conclusions to be drawn from this research. The conclusions are presented in response to the questions posed in this study. The second section, therefore, begins by describing what this research can tell us about the reasons for sub-regional variations in NEET numbers; then looks at what works and does not work in terms of prevention and reduction of NEET. At the end of each section implications from the findings are outlined for the LSC, Connexions Service and LEAs.

It is hoped that the **expert seminars** in each region will identify additional implications which stem from this study, and the way forward – both short and long-term - to address the issues raised by this research.

6.1 Conclusions from the data collected in each of the 2 LSC regions

6.1.1 South East

6.1.1.1 NEETs, Unknowns and the NEET churn

- The NEET group is too heterogeneous to treat as a single group and if the NEET numbers are to be reduced it is important to recognise that individuals require different levels of support. Simply providing similar opportunities for young people in this group is unlikely to solve the NEET problem. Many of the young people requiring intensive support - the Core group - have complex behavioural and social problems, which need to be tackled first before they can be supported to move into and stay in EET. The 'floating NEETs' which contribute to the NEET churn seem to require a lower level of support to help them to move into and stay in EET.
- There has been little change in the numbers of NEET in the region over the past 12 months (November 2004-November 2005). However, there are significant disparities in the numbers of NEET in the various sub-regions but all fall below the England average. Whilst a peak in September is normal across the country, some parts of the South East experience considerable rises in the numbers of NEET at this time.
- Across the South East there are a number of small pockets of deprivation with high numbers of NEET young people. In some deprived rural or coastal areas, there are small pockets of NEET but due to the small number involved these young people are neglected because providing expensive provision

which will not have a dramatic effect on NEET numbers is not seen as a priority.

- On paper the South East looks like the most affluent part of the country but within the many small pockets of deprivation people are faced with similar problems to some of the northern former mill towns. As a result projects/organisations working with NEET people in the South East often find it difficult to attract funding when they are competing with projects/organisations in the north of the country (traditionally seen as less affluent).
- The numbers of Unknowns in the region have for the most part stayed below 10 per cent. The peak experienced in September however, is significant in all of the sub-regions, in one are reaching above 50 per cent.
- There was a lack of suitable jobs for the 16-18 NEET group in some parts of the region leading to NEET churn. Jobs were commonly available in highly specialised industries or too far away in London

6.1.1.2 NEET prevention

- There is strong support for the argument that the most effective way to tackle the NEET problem is to identify young people at risk of becoming NEET as early as possible and support them in tailoring their education to fit their needs.
- Providing alternative curriculum for less academic pupils has been championed as an important and effective way to prevent young people becoming NEET as it helps ensure that all school leavers gain some form of recognised qualification.
- There is a demand for an increase in roll on- roll off courses to prevent young people having to wait long periods to start courses, and becoming NEET.

6.1.1.3 NEET reduction

- E2E is a useful tool for helping NEETS to re-engage. However, it is not suitable for everyone in the NEET group and on its own cannot tackle many of the social and behavioural problems faced by some young people which have often led them to becoming NEET in the first place.
- There are a growing number of E2E enhancement/brokerage programmes being offered. The respondents were enthusiastic about these programmes as they provide additional support for participants and help them to tackle some of their social and behavioural problems. However, at present the provision of E2E enhancement is sporadic and unstructured.
- Transport is a key problem in Kent. The size of the area and poor public transport makes the delivery of provision difficult, especially in rural areas. There was also evidence to suggest that transport issues contributed to the NEET numbers as many people in the NEET group cannot travel from their homes to areas where they could either enrol on an E2E course or get a job.

- o Much of the NEET reduction work focuses on helping young people build up their confidence and motivation as lack of confidence and motivation were regarded as major causes of young people becoming NEET. This work was very successful but requires a high student staff ratio. It was apparent that for a programme to be successful it is essential to ensure that it includes the right balance between fun activities and sessions providing information. However at present, both funding and provision appear sporadic.

6.1.1.4 Funding

- o Focus on hard outcomes by bodies monitoring the success of projects and controlling the funding was criticised by respondents. Focusing solely on the number of participants on a programme who moved out of the NEET group and into EET and not giving credit for soft outcomes which are often harder to quantify but seen as essential to help many 'Core' NEETs progress onto EET, was seen as counter-productive.
- o Young people who are at risk of dropping out are less likely to be accepted on programmes that need to demonstrate that hard outcomes have been achieved to sustain funding. As a result provision is often only available for young people in the "General" or "Floating" NEET group rather than for the "Core" NEET group.
- o One of the biggest barriers to provision for the NEET group is related to funding. Criticism focused on the nature of the funding. All the respondents claimed that the process of applying for funding was too complicated and time consuming. They also felt that it could be made much easier if all the funding came from one source rather than numerous small pots.
- o Concern was also raised regarding the evaluation of the programmes, especially on the emphasis placed on the number of participants who progressed into positive destinations, and the link between funding and numbers entering EET.

6.1.1.5 Partnership working

- o Effective partnership working is regarded as essential for effective provision. The evidence suggests that partnerships across the southeast are strong and effective. This was confirmed by the recent development of the South East Regional NEET task group that aims to build stronger partnerships across the region.
- o Working in partnership with employers was raised a number of times as an important process, exemplifying good practice and an area of potential difficulty. There is considerable concern that many employers are unwilling to employ young people from the NEET group as it involves substantial effort on their part to support the young people. In the past financial incentives have been offered to employers but these are no longer available. However, Berkshire Connexions provided an example of how they employed someone for a short period of time to build relations with local employers which helped facilitate productive long-term relationships.

6.1.2 Yorkshire and Humber

6.1.2.1 NEETs, Unknowns, and the NEET Churn

- There is disparity in the numbers of NEETs within the region – with the most deprived areas having the highest numbers and the most affluent having the lowest numbers of NEET. Such a disparity can be seen at an intra-regional level, for example - South Yorkshire and North Yorkshire; at an inter-area level – North East Lincolnshire and East Riding and; at a local intra area level – Howden and Bridlington (towns in East Riding).
- The region faces complex problems, in addition to high levels of unemployment and low attainment at Level 2, some areas have high teenage conception rates and occurrence of LDDs – factors associated with young people becoming and/or remaining NEET. The percentage of care leavers – another group identified as vulnerable to NEET – entering into education, employment and training varies across the region, with some sub-regions appearing to perform better than others. In addition, the number of young people becoming NEET from Mixed race, Black, Asian and White working class backgrounds was disproportionately high in some sub-regions.
- Some parts of the region suffer from deprivation and multi-generational unemployment leading to low levels of aspiration among young people and their families. The combination of these factors makes it more difficult for those working with NEET to effect a reduction in NEET numbers.
- There has been very little change in the percentage of NEETs in all sub-regions over the past 12 months.
- The number of Unknowns has remained below 10 per cent in all but one of the sub-regions. With the exception of one sub-region, there has been a slight decrease in the number of Unknowns over the past 12 months.
- Significantly high numbers of 16-18 year olds are in employment without training, in all sub-regions, compared to those whose jobs include training opportunities
- In many parts of the region, work was said to be largely temporary, seasonal and unreliable, offering no training and no security, and in some areas there was a tradition of casual ‘cash in hand’ employment
- The range of learning and skills provision is too narrow for those with intensive support needs – the ‘Core’ NEETs and there are insufficient number of courses which lead to jobs resulting in demotivation among young people coming in and out of a succession of inappropriate learning opportunities
- There is a demand for an increase in roll on roll of courses to prevent young people having to wait long periods to start courses

6.1.2.2 NEET prevention

- Coordinated support between schools, Connexions and youth agencies has led to the development of a comprehensive support package of pastoral support for young people

- Early intervention and long-term relationships between agencies and young people appear to be successful, particularly in areas with multi-generational NEETs
- The involvement of young people in planning and developing services appears to have helped to improve their self-confidence and retention levels.
- A lack of learning and training provision that matches the needs of the local labour market appears to counter the positive effect of prevention initiatives as trained young people cannot find jobs and end up re-joining the NEET group.
- Providing alternative curriculum for less academic pupils has been championed as an important and effective way to prevent young people becoming NEET as it helps ensure that all school leavers gain some form of recognised qualification

6.1.2.3 NEET reduction

- Shared responsibility/ownership of the NEET issue amongst all partners appears to have made a significant contribution to a reduction in the numbers of NEETs and Unknowns in one area of the region.
- The omission of employers from the collaborative partnerships on NEETs, with one exception of the involvement in the scrutiny Commission in South Yorkshire, is regarded as a missed opportunity, as their inclusion can have several benefits for young people and for agencies working with NEETS.
- Targeting resources by mapping NEETs geographically has proven successful in some parts of the region.
- E2E is a useful tool for helping NEETS to re-engage. However, it is not suitable for everyone in the NEET group and on its own cannot tackle many of the social and behavioural problems faced by some young people which have often led them to being NEET in the first place. Furthermore, many of the hardest to reach groups are missing out on E2E provision due to eligibility criteria which stem from the focus on hard outcomes.
- Initiatives that focus on soft outcomes, including confidence building and raising aspirations of young people, were found to be very effective in retaining young people on courses and increasing their likelihood of becoming and remaining EET in the longer term, despite being resource intensive in the short-term.

6.1.2.4 Funding

- Funding is a particularly contentious issue for the voluntary and community sector in the region. Youth workers and managers found that applying for funding was resource intensive and the instability of funding made staff retention difficult, thus leading to loss of expertise from these agencies.
- The requirement of funding bodies to achieve hard outcomes in respect of NEETs is unpopular amongst Connexions and youth agencies across the

region. They favoured soft outcomes which they argued were more applicable to the nature of the NEET group – young people with complex and multiple needs - they have to work with in this region.

6.1.2.5 Partnership working

- Effective partnership working is regarded as key for effective provision. The concept of ‘owning’ the NEET issue has become established in the Yorkshire and Humber. Partnerships have improved because of the shared responsibility for young people who are, or are at risk of becoming, NEET. Particular success was reported in schools.
- Partnerships with parents and families are beginning to emerge and are regarded as critical in engaging NEETs, especially in areas of deprivation and high unemployment, to improve aspiration levels among families and consequently, among young people who are NEET.
- Partnerships with employers are considered necessary for improving opportunities for, and perceptions of young people. They can also help to raise awareness among employers of the value of vocational qualifications. In South Yorkshire steps had been taken to engage employers in discussions about NEETs. However, across the rest of the region it was reported that partnerships with employers were under-developed.
- Including young people in decision-making about options available to them is regarded by a majority of professionals as key to ensuring their engagement with EET opportunities.

6.2 Overarching Conclusions and implications

This section draws together the overarching conclusions from this study and the implications that emerge from what has been learnt from this research.

6.2.1 Why NEET numbers vary within and between the two LSC regions – South East and Yorkshire & the Humber.

The causes of variation in NEET numbers within and between the two regions appear to share common elements or factors. However, the local context with which these common factors interact seems to be critical in giving rise to the observed variations. Hence, the variation from the national or regional average, whether it is in a positive or negative direction, appears to depend, in the main, on the influence the local context exerts on these factors. This influence in turn appear to determine the probability of a young person in a given local area becoming and remaining NEET. These factors include:

- *Ineffectiveness of financial incentives* - The failure of financial incentives to encourage take up of learning and training opportunities appears to be more pronounced in economically deprived areas in the regions where benefit take up or the need to work is high.
- *Differential access to labour market* – Access to labour market appears to be much worse in areas where there are large numbers of SMEs or specialist employers, where learning providers do not understand the needs of local labour market, and where employers lack sufficient knowledge about the range of qualifications and the equivalence between vocational and academic qualifications.
- *Membership of disadvantaged communities* - Young people in communities affected by deprivation and multi-generational unemployment, appear to be more likely to have a poor sense of mobility, suffer discrimination in the labour market, lack suitable role-models, and lack access to suitable jobs in their local area.
- *Residence in areas with poor infrastructure* - Areas which have poor transport infrastructure, have poor and inadequate housing are more likely to have larger number of NEETs as young people in these areas are hampered from accessing further education and job opportunities.

6.2.1.1 Implications for the LSC

- ◇ Incentives such as training allowances and EMAs do not appear to be sufficiently attractive to encourage take up in the most deprived areas and a better understanding, through further research, is needed of the amounts young people are likely to consider adequate.
- ◇ The potential for young people who leave school without traditional qualifications, to enter EET appears to be restricted by the lack of awareness among employers of the range of qualifications awarded to young people and their equivalence to traditional qualifications such as GCSEs and A levels.

6.2.1.2 Implications for Connexions

- ◇ There appears to be a need to raise awareness among young people of the long-term benefits and future earning potential of taking up training even when it pays a lower level of income compared to a job for equivalent hours
- ◇ The effects of multi-generational unemployment within families and communities on young people are likely to be more effectively addressed through initiatives that encourage parental input.

6.2.1.3 Implications for Local Authorities

- ◇ Availability of an accessible transport system appears to be key to ensuring that young people are better able to access any further education or suitable job opportunities the areas has to offer

6.2.1.4 Implications for learning providers

- ◇ Young people's employability in the local labour market can be improved if they can access learning and skills provision locally which can give them the qualifications and skills demanded and needed by the local labour market.

6.2.2 What works and does not work in terms of NEET prevention

An understanding of the characteristics of young people who were likely to become NEET on leaving school appears to be key to designing programmes and initiatives that work and achieve the aim of NEET prevention. The young people likely to become NEET are seen as a heterogeneous group with multiple needs. Successful interventions appear to be those which take into account the complexity and multiplicity of problems faced by individuals and offer appropriate level of support.

The key features of such strategies are likely to include:

- Timely intervention at school before disengagement and disaffection set in. This can help to ensure that:
 - problems, such as bullying, are dealt with effectively before they develop, thus decreasing the probability of a young person disengaging from school and becoming NEET. It can also prevent a future call on resources which would otherwise be required for intensive support after a young person has left school and become NEET
 - strong relationships can be developed between family, community and school which can also lead to a positive impact on siblings
- Provision of coordinated and holistic support at school from a range of agencies. Such support appears to be critical where multiple interventions are required. A coordinated and joined up approach appears to benefit all involved including, pastoral support advisers, external agencies and young people, as.
 - Resources are not duplicated in different agencies working with the same young person

- all agencies acquire an in-depth knowledge of the young person involved and can target their services accordingly
 - young people receiving holistic support feel confident that all their concerns are being dealt with and are also less likely to play agencies off against each other
- Giving young people a role in making decisions about their choices, as it appears to be key to engaging young people who are likely to become NEET as they tend to be those who lack support at home, experience bullying and feel they are not listened to at school because of poor attainment and behaviour. The benefits of including young people in planning service delivery and personal development include improved confidence, a sense of achievement and self worth in young person. These are likely to reduce the probability of young person becoming NEET on leaving school, as their motivation levels and aspirations are likely to have been raised.
 - Provision of an alternative curriculum as it appears to be essential to engaging 'potential NEETs'. The traditional academic pathway is not suitable for all young people which often leads less academic students to disengage from education altogether. An alternative curriculum is likely to both prevent drop out from school and prepare an individual for further education and training with a vocational element.
 - Transitional support for those moving from primary to secondary school and those leaving secondary education as it seems critical for individuals with intensive support needs at a time when they are faced with a wide range of choices. Continued support during this transition stage can potentially prevent a lapse in confidence and motivation, and consequent disengagement and disaffection from education.

6.2.2.1 Implications for the LSC

- ◇ Resources could be utilised more effectively through the use of early intervention strategies as it is likely to lead to a reduction in the number of young people becoming NEET in the future and therefore, can reduce the future call and demand on resources for intensive support

6.2.2.2 Implications for Connexions

- ◇ Early intervention strategies that target young people who are likely to become NEET appear to have proven successful and consideration needs to be given to a greater investment in this area
- ◇ Transitional support between school and post-16 provision appears to have proven successful but provision is patchy and needs to be made more consistent and to be adequately resourced
- ◇ Involving young people in decisions about their future options has been found to raise their aspiration and motivation levels, and needs to underpin all work with young people likely to become NEETS

6.2.2.3 Implications for Local Education Authorities

- ◇ Coordinated support, from all relevant agencies, to young people likely to become NEET while they are still at school has proven successful. However, this appears to be patchy and needs to be made integral to work with all potential NEETs

- ◇ Anti-bullying policies which can effectively deal with and stamp out bullying are necessary to ensure that students do not disengage with school and consequently, education.
- ◇ Alternative curricula which offer a range of vocational options and have the flexibility to meet the needs of young people with wide ranging interests and aptitudes can help to engage young people who can not cope with academic curricula; engender self-confidence; and equip them with the basic skills they need to tackle more formal assessments at a later stage.
- ◇ An alternative curriculum is much more likely to engage the hardest to reach but in order for it to have the desired impact on NEET numbers, consideration needs to be given to how its status and the awareness of its potential can be raised within the FE sectors and with employers, especially SMEs.

6.2.3 What works and does not work in terms of NEET reduction

The characteristics of the NEET group once again are central to identifying the key ingredients which are likely to influence what will work well with this group of young people. The key aspects of good practice appear to include:

- Appropriate targeting of resources according to the need of particular group of NEETs and the local context in which support is being provided. This requires a detailed mapping of NEETS using the available data and deploying PAs and allocating resources on a geographical basis
- Holistic support which takes into account the complexity of issues involved. Such support can prevent the need for multiple interventions by addressing the full range of issues affecting an individual and can also prevent young people from returning to the NEET group after they have left it. The provision from voluntary and community sector organisations appears to be valued by young people as it seems to fulfil this criteria and has the added advantage of being perceived as independent from statutory services.
- Positive partnerships between a range of agencies which work with young people as they appear fundamental to developing good practice. The complexity of the NEET group is such that numerous organisations and agencies need to be involved as they can bring their different perspectives and experience to the table in order to address the issues of concern to young people. Working together allows partners to:
 - share specialised expertise and knowledge
 - take collective responsibility for NEETs and issues impacting on NEET rather than placing responsibility on a single organisation i.e. Connexions
 - engage with the employer community
 - share data and knowledge about the destinations of young people

However, the plethora of meetings focusing on NEETs between various partner organisations is seen sometimes to lead to a lack of clarity about the responsibilities and accountabilities of respective organisations.

- Involving young people in decision making and recognising their achievements, no matter, how small, as it appears to be important. Young people in the NEET group are rarely involved in decision-making or given an opportunity to voice their concerns. In addition, young people who become NEET often have very poor or no qualifications from school and their sense of self-worth and self-confidence can be improved by noting and celebrating even small achievement which can contribute to them taking bigger steps towards engaging with educational or training opportunities. Additionally,
 - Young people's readiness to make decisions after leaving school and their sense of growing maturity needs to be utilised in enabling them to access further education and employment opportunities.
 - By involving young people in their own development planning, young people can be enabled to 'own' their problems and encouraged to be proactive in identifying their support needs and in recognising the distance travelled.

- Innovative practice (such as the use of sport, art and media to engage young people in project activities and learning opportunities) and informal learning techniques utilised by a range of projects in the region as they appear to encourage and motivate individuals with low aspiration and low sense of achievement.

Factors which **impede** the progress of initiatives focusing on NEET reduction include:

- Emphasis on hard outcomes and a disregard of soft outcomes by funders is an issue which appears to cause a great deal of concern among agencies working with NEETs. Young people who have failed to achieve at school and who have lacked adequate support in the home tend to have low aspirations and/or low motivation and self-esteem. Agencies with considerable experience of working with NEETS regard their first priority as tackling these issues before they can address over longer-term the issue of integrating young people into EET as:
 - short-term motivational classes are at times enough to build self-esteem and inform young people about their options
 - for agencies working with young people with a complex array of needs, achieving a hard outcome of integrating them into EET requires intensive support over a long-term to build trust, improve levels of motivation and confidence before the young people feel ready to consider whether they want to engage with further education, training or employment.

- The link between funding and targets based on hard outcomes is a source of concern for many agencies. For many NEETs, the achievement of such outcomes over a short-term is unrealistic. Such targets are also likely to skew provision, as services under pressure to meet the funders' targets tend to focus resources on those NEETs who are much easier to work with and are most likely to achieve the hard outcomes of engaging with EET. This is likely to deny those with complex needs, much needed support to help them into EET opportunities.

- Pre- Level 2 provision such as E2E, E2V, and Life Skills are valuable assets to post-16 learning provision for the NEET group. They theoretically fill a gap

that had previously existed, as many young people are not capable of achieving Level 2. Yet despite the perceived benefits of pre-level 2 provision it is not accessible to all because

- Demand for E2E has outstripped supply and is likely to be targeted towards those most likely to achieve a hard outcome within the prescribed 20 weeks.
 - A lack of pre E2E provision appears to be a significant problem in the South East and the Humber. The introduction of E2E is regarded to have drawn resources away from previously successful Life skills programmes
 - West Yorkshire had been chosen as a pilot area for the introduction of E2V. However, projects/organisations in the South East have found it difficult to attract funding as they have been competing with projects in the north of the country (traditionally seen as less affluent and therefore, a higher priority for funding in this area).
- Provision of 'Roll on Roll off' courses is insufficient to meet demand. The availability of such courses can prevent young people from joining the NEET group.

6.2.3.1 Implications for the LSC

- ◇ Using data to map the geographical location of NEETs is likely to support targeted intervention and thus increase the effectiveness of resource utilisation.
- ◇ Emphasis on targets associated with hard outcomes is likely to prevent providers from targeting resources at both the hardest to reach and those who require intensive support
- ◇ Soft outcomes have the potential to lead to hard outcomes in the long-term, and to reduce the likelihood of NEET churn. They need to be seen as an investment for the future
- ◇ Incentivisation of employers to engage with NEETs by offering them work-based learning opportunities or work-placements needs to be considered to increase the pool of relevant opportunities for NEET young people.
- ◇ Provision of sufficient pre-E2E programmes for young people not able to access existing E2E provision needs to be considered.

6.2.3.2 Implications for Connexions

- ◇ Giving young people the opportunity to become involved in decisions which affect them and celebrating small achievements are likely to increase young people's engagement with EET opportunities.
- ◇ Involvement of employers in LMCs needs to be considered as it can be of benefit to not just young people but also to agencies working to reduce NEET numbers. It can lead to an increased awareness among employers of the NEETs issue, improve their understanding of the range of vocational qualifications and how they compare, and lead to work-placement or work-based learning opportunities for young people.

6.2.3.3 Implications for learning providers

- ◇ Provision of roll-on roll-off courses can help to prevent young people joining the NEET group as they can access learning opportunities as and

when they are ready without having to wait long periods to start courses, causing them to become dishearten and disengaged.

- ◇ Limited provision at levels suited to the abilities of some young people in the NEET group can mean that they are less likely to access education and training opportunities

6.2.3.4 Implications for all

- ◇ Partnership working is an invaluable asset but there needs to be a clarity about to how agreed actions should be progressed and where accountability lies. This can lead to a coherent and co-ordinated approach to tackling NEETs both regionally and sub-regionally, while still allowing flexibility at local level for staff to tailor the interventions to the specific circumstances of NEETs in their local area. The emerging Children's Trusts offer an ideal opportunity for building effective and sustainable partnerships across the sector divide, to tackle the issue of NEETs.
- ◇ For the 'generational', 'core' or long-term NEETs, a multi-pronged approach is needed which can address issues as wide ranging as improving parenting skills, developing deprived communities, improving the infra-structure within these communities, and reducing child poverty.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

List of questions for the individual and focus group interviews.

(These were adapted for different respondents from different organisations)

Q.1 Please explain what your role entails in relation to the issue of NEET

Q.2 Please give an overview of the project/s you manage or play a part in

Q.3 In your view, what are the factors associated with young people becoming/remaining NEET in your area?

Q.4 What initiatives do you provide/support in terms of NEET avoidance for 14-16?

Q.5 What initiatives do you provide/support in terms of NEET reduction over 16?

Q.6 What initiatives do the LSC provide/support in terms of NEET avoidance for 14-16?

Q.7 What initiatives do the LSC provide/support in terms of NEET reduction over 16?

Q.8 What young people does the project you manage/ work on target young people?

Q.9 How do you recruit young people to your project? Do you receive referrals from other organisations?

Q.10 Can young people refer themselves?

Q.11 If yes, how would they hear about this project?

Q.12 How do you engage and retain young people on the project?

Q.13 Do you refer/signpost young people to other projects if they are unsuitable for yours?

Q.14 What projects, or elements of projects do you think have worked?

Q.15 Has the project collected any evidence to show they work?

Q.16 If not, how do you assess how well projects are working?

Q.17 What organisations do you work with in order to ensure that young people receive appropriate support?

Q.18 How do you work with them? Are their agreements in place? Are these explicit/implicit?

Q.19 Do you meet regularly?

Q.20 Who is responsible for collecting data on NEETs?

Q.21 Who is responsible for acting on this data and developing practice and policy response?

Q.22 Are there protocols in terms of sharing information throughout the area and/or with other districts in the sub-region?

Q.23 Do you follow up on young people's activities once they have left your project?

Q.24 Do you keep data on long-term outcomes?

Q.25 Are there any factors that affect the services you provide, both positive and negative?

Q.26 What more could be done to improve the outcomes from this project ?

Q.27 Is there anything else you would like to add that we have not covered?

Appendix 2

Written Questionnaire

Section 1: Your role

Please explain what your role entails in relation to the issue of NEET

How do you ensure that people who have left the need group?

Section 2: Provision

What initiatives do you provide/support in terms of NEET avoidance for 14-16?

What initiatives do you provide/support in terms of NEET reduction over 16?

Section 3: Personal perspective on the issue of NEET in your area

In your view, what are the factors associated with young people becoming/remaining NEET in your area?

Section 4: What is working

What projects, or elements of projects do you think have worked well?

How do you assess how well projects are working?

As a result of the project(s) has there been any evidence of reduction of the NEET population or numbers entering the NEET group? (E.g. positive responses from young people, destination reports, tracking)

Section 5: Partnership working

What organisations do you work with in order to ensure that young people receive appropriate support?

Do you have formal partnership agreements in place?

Section 6: Data management

Who is responsible for collecting data on NEETs?

Who is responsible for acting on this data and developing practice and policy responses?

Are there protocols in terms of sharing information throughout the area and/or with other districts in the sub-region? Are these explicit/implicit?

Section 7: Tracking

Do you follow up on young people's activities once they have left your project?

Do you keep data on long-term outcomes?

Section 8: Barriers to provision

Are there any factors that affect the services you provide, both positive and negative?

What more could be done to improve the outcomes from your project(s)?

Section 9: Additional comments

Is there anything else you would like to add that we have not covered?
(Including issues we have missed, people we should talk to,
reports/evaluations that we should be aware of)

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Appendix 3

Opportunity plus programme - South East

Day	Activities	Outcome
1	Introduction to team building, getting to know you	Beneficiaries will feel more comfortable with their environment and team leaders and peers. Firm understanding of the course content, aims and objectives, ground rules and housekeeping.
2	Roles within teams, focusing on strengths, meet with your placement liaison advisor	Able to explain team process, able to express opinions without losing control, and understand the role of the Placement Liaison Advisor.
3	Outdoor activity	To provide the beneficiaries with the opportunity to engage in a series of adventurous, physical lateral thinking problems and teamwork
4	Life coaching, self-belief, introduction to job search, what could I do?	Beneficiaries will know how their fellow team members perceive them. Write and share their individual ideals, values and understand that values could change rapidly. Encourage communication verbally under pressure. Able to deal with stress, personal goal setting. Explore methods of effective job search; list several possible jobs at current time and future aspirations.
5	Personal learning styles, CV writing	Able to make positive comments about themselves in front of others, identify personal barriers when trying to learn and discover other ways of learning. Produce a CV, which will include all the key skills they have learned from the course.
6	Life styles and future aspirations, job application forms	Encourage team to work together and achieve the objectives given by using their imagination and lateral thinking. Discussion on different ways of spending leisure time. Identify the positive and negative sides to an application form and the correct way of selling yourself within an application form.
7	Individual self esteem, interview techniques	Emphasis on personal variety and capabilities within the employment environment. Highlight all avenues of interview techniques including role-play in interviews. Look at individual personal skills that can be used in an interview.
8	Creative day – film making, art work,	To enable all to have fun, utilise their teamwork skills, highlight and encourage their personal

	marketing ourselves	creative abilities. Emphasise is placed on their positive abilities.
9	Communication, personal behaviour and personal presentation, telephone techniques	Discussions on different ways of communicating. Develop listening skills, and enable the young people to identify different interpretations of the meanings behind other views. A variety of practical activities are undertaken by the team, which requires the young people to communicate, through verbal, visual and hearing senses. Telephone role-play to conduct a telephone interview with confidence.
10	Team challenge, strengths, certificate presentation, action plans	Opportunity for the team to use their personal skills developed over the duration of the course to complete a series of tasks. The final part of the course is used highlight the personal growth, strengths, achievements, values and skills of the participants. Certificates are presented

Appendix 4 – Projects in the South East

ESF Measure and Specification	Organisation and Contact Details	Description of the Project Activity
1.2.1 - Bridge to Learning	Kent County Council (delivered through Key Training Services) in conjunction with a range of partners	This programme will provide outreach activities to disadvantaged 16 and 17 year olds not engaged in learning or employment to support and motivate them to take up training and education opportunities or employment with learning.
1.2.2 - Personal Development Opportunities	Instant Muscle Limited	This programme will offer additional physical and personal development opportunities to 16 and 17 year olds participating in the LSC mainstream funded Entry to Employment programme.
2.1.1 - Basic Skills Access (Essential Skills)	Kent County Council (delivered through Key Training Services)	This programme will equip the most hard to help 16 and 17 year olds who are not able to access traditional methods of class teaching with the essential literacy, numeracy and English language skills to enable them to progress to further learning and employment.
2.1.2 - Entry to Employment Enhancement	Kent County Council (delivered through Key Training Services) in partnership with other organisations	This programme will improve the ability of unemployed 16 and 17 year olds participating in the LSC mainstream funded Entry to Employment programme to acquire essential skills and progress to accredited learning and employment.

ESF Round 6 – September 2003

ESF Measure and Specification	Organisation and Contact Name	Description of the Project Activity
2.2.1 - Inclusion in Learning	Kent County Council LEA in partnership with Medway Council, schools and other partners	This programme will increase attainment and retention of pupils at 16 by providing additional support and activities focussed on 13-16 year olds at risk of being excluded or excluded from school.

Round 8 November 2004

ESF Measure and Specification	Organisation and Contact Name	Description of the Project Activity
1.2.3 – Inclusive Pathways	Kent County Council	This project will offer a range of co-ordinated services that will deliver essential skills, life skills, training and employment opportunities. It will offer access to local vocational opportunities through community improvement projects.

Round 8 Supplementary Round May 2005

ESF Measure and Specification	Organisation and Contact Name	Description of the Project Activity
3.1.14 – What's Your Flava Skills Event 2006	Recruitment Exhibitions	What's Your Flava is an interactive, exciting and informative event aimed at inspiring young people from throughout Kent and Medway to think seriously about their futures. This two day event is filled with opportunities for visitors to participate in a wide range of 'hands-on' activities. We want visitors to 'be inspired' by the experience of attending this event and to depart with a clearer understanding of the opportunities in further education, training, employment and entrepreneurship open to them.

Appendix 5

NEETs in the South East region Variations in NEET numbers: reasons, remedies and impact

Additional information for LSDA presentation

Causes of NEET in the South East (slide 8)

Young people-centred factors

Social and behavioural problems

'Low self-confidence and behavioural problems impact on their ability to engage in EET.'

Negative experience of school

'[School] was horrible and I hated it. I used to get beaten up and picked on and that is why I never attended.'

Lack of knowledge about available options/readiness to think about the future

'I left school and thought about doing nothing but it is only now I am a bit older that I am thinking I'm a bit stuck and what am I supposed to do now?'

Inability to see long-term benefits of training (Y&H)

'They can't see the long-term benefits... they don't think that far ahead unless you can work with them for a long time and you can build up trust.'

Systemic factors

Financial disincentives

'Many young people are reluctant to come on a course as they will lose their benefits. The process of getting a course accredited by DWP so they can retain their benefits is incredibly complicated and long winded.'

Employer-centred factors

Lack of opportunities for young people

'The majority of employers are looking for well qualified and academically gifted staff... Berkshire imports its graduates; we don't grow our own, which disadvantages the local residents.'

High expectations of young people

'Many jobs they advertise requiring 4 or 5 good GCSE's could actually be done by someone with much lower qualifications.'

Recruitment from local networks e.g. family and friends (Y&H)

'They recruit from their own sources so the kid on the estate isn't going to be employed...if your family have been unemployed for some time they just do not have those networks.'

Reasons for sub regional and intra-area variation (slide 9)

Social factors

Deprivation and unemployment

'Maidstone has many similarities with some of the northern mill towns, when the dockyard closed the main source of employment for the area was gone.'

Lack of social mobility

'There are also significant problems in some of the coastal areas where there are many young people who are extremely isolated and don't have much contact with the outside world.'

Multi-generational unemployment (Y&H)

'You can get a whole row of houses where no one has a job...it is the norm to do that, no matter how much you preach during the day in a youth centre you know they go home back to that environment.'

Environmental factors

Poor or insufficient public transport

'Due to poor and expensive public transport it is difficult for young people to commute.'

Good practice

Wheels 2 Work is a national initiative which offers short-term scooter loans and driving lessons to help young, unemployed and disadvantaged people in rural areas get into work.

NEET prevention (slides 10 and 11)

What helps?

Alternative curriculum

'As a society we don't provide them with the right education, they need a more stimulating environment to learn in...We are also asking them to stay on beyond 15 which many of them don't want to do, unless we can engage with them in Year 9 they are likely to disengage altogether.'

What hinders?

Lengthy application procedures for jobs

'Hanging around waiting for replies to application forms makes me feel that I am talking to a brick wall.'

Lack of incentives to employ and train young people

'Employers don't get financial incentives any more. However, if they employ an 18 year old on New Deal then they get £60 per week.'

NEET reduction (slide 12)

What helps?

E2E and pre E2E programmes

Good practice

E2E brokerage/enhancement schemes have been set with extra funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) and LSC to give extra support to participants on E2E.

West Yorkshire is currently piloting the Entry to Vocational learning (E2V) programme – a pre E2E programme.

Other factors affecting NEET reduction and prevention in the South East (slide 14)

Partnership

What helps?

- Sharing responsibility
- Coordinated support between schools, Connexions, youth agencies etc.

What hinders?

- Missing partners:
 - young people
 - industry/employers
 - parents and families

Good practice

Berkshire Connexions employed someone for a short period to facilitate productive long-term relationships with local employers.

In Y&H – the concept of collectively ‘owning the NEETs’ had been introduced. This had a significant impact on reducing the numbers of NEET, particularly in schools.

Management, sharing, ownership and use of data

What helps?

- Data sharing between Connexions and other organisations

What hinders?

- Keeping track of NEETs - important but resource intensive

Support for young people

What helps?

- Nature of support
 - **Holistic** (for young people with complex needs)
 - **Coordinated** (to maximise resources)
 - **Tailored** (to individuals’ needs)
 - **Accessible** (non-timetabled)

- **Independent** (from statutory authorities)
- **Innovative and inspirational** (to motivate and raise aspirations)

- Early intervention

Targets on NEETs

What hinders?

- 'Hard targets' linked to funding seen as unrealistic and counter-productive
- Too many and conflicting targets
- Targets encourage the tendency to focus on the easiest to work with young people

'If you put a course on and you have 10 on the course but only 3 finish you've wasted 70% of your money. If you had spent admittedly 3 or 4 times the amount in preparing... doing developmental work... you would probably have had 70% complete the course.'

Funding

What hinders?

- Too many funding strands
- Resource intensive application processes

'Current funding and provision is sporadic and unstructured.'

Implications

Implications for the LSC

- ◇ Incentives such as training allowances and EMAs do not appear to be sufficiently attractive to encourage take up in the most deprived areas. A better understanding is needed of the amounts young people are likely to consider adequate.
- ◇ The potential for young people who leave school without traditional qualifications, to enter EET appears to be restricted by the lack of awareness among employers of the range of qualifications awarded to young people.
- ◇ Resources could be utilised more effectively through the use of early intervention strategies - likely to reduce the number of young people becoming NEET and reduce the future demand on resources for intensive support.
- ◇ Need to consider provision of sufficient pre-E2E programmes for young people unable to access available E2E provision.
- ◇ Incentivisation of employers to engage with NEETs needs to be considered.
- ◇ Provision of 'Roll on Roll off' courses is insufficient to meet demand. Such courses can prevent young people from joining the NEET group.
- ◇ Emphasis on targets associated with hard outcomes is likely to prevent providers from targeting resources at both the hardest to reach and those who require intensive support.
- ◇ Soft outcomes have the potential to lead to hard outcomes in the long-term, and to reduce the likelihood of NEET churn. They need to be seen as an investment for the future.

Implications for Connexions

- ◇ The effects of multi-generational unemployment are likely to be better addressed through initiatives that encourage parental input.
- ◇ Early intervention strategies have proven successful and consideration needs to be given to a greater investment in this area.
- ◇ More involvement of employers in LMCs needs to be considered.
- ◇ Need to raise awareness among young people of the long-term benefits of taking up training even when it pays at a lower level in the immediate term.
- ◇ Need to consider how young people/their parents can be fully involved in decisions that affect young people's futures.

Implication for Learning Providers

- ◇ Young peoples' employability in the local labour market can be improved if local learning and skills provision can give them the qualifications and skills demanded and needed by the local labour market.

Implication for Local Authority

- ◇ Availability of an accessible transport system appears to be key to ensuring that young people are able to access FE or job opportunities locally.

Implications for all

- ◇ There needs to be clarity about how agreed actions should be progressed and where accountability lies.
- ◇ Applying for funding could be made easier if the funding came from one source rather than numerous small pots.
- ◇ Multi-pronged approach needed to address wide-ranging issues from improving parenting skills and creating job opportunities to improving the infrastructure within communities.

Appendix 6

Summary of discussions and action points at NEET dissemination event on 23rd March

Conclusions	Implications	Other Implications	Actions
NEET prevention	For Local Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LSC influencing role ▪ Single 14-19 funding body ▪ Role of local authority pre-16 is key ▪ Create ownership in schools – new progression targets 	<p style="text-align: center;">Long term</p> <p>Consider Level 1 provision widely available for 14-16</p>
	For LSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emphasis in 14-19 implementation plan. Role of specialised diplomas ▪ Raise in LSC priorities ▪ Address in 3yr DPs ▪ Multi-agency approach is essential to this working ▪ Share long term investment ▪ Short term funding streams are a barrier to success ▪ Getting secondary schools on board ▪ Issue of funding and sustaining 	<p style="text-align: center;">Short term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure 3yr DPs contain provision that is roll on/roll off ▪ Get all relevant people together to set up a 14-19 strategy ▪ Engage schools in promoting alternative curriculum to respond to individuals learning needs ▪ Access courses to FE at early stage pre and post
			<p style="text-align: center;">Long term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to develop 14-19 strategy collectively ▪ Look at getting alternative L1 provision in schools ▪ More roll on roll off

Conclusions	Implications	Other Implications	Actions
NEET reduction	For LSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funding and flexibility ▪ Capacity provider network ▪ Unfilled places vs lack of provision (in appropriate provision) ▪ Role of Voluntary and Community Sector ▪ Role of LA ? ▪ Alternative impact measures need to be developed ▪ Identify pathways and progression rates ▪ EMA extension impacting on attractiveness of the programme both to YP and training providers ▪ NEETs are not all the same. They have different needs ▪ Separate out e2e and pre e2e ▪ Under utilised spaces due to differing reasons ▪ Locations and logistics – who provides? 	<p style="text-align: center;">Short term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identifying need for new provision ▪ Connexions targeting to specific young people
			<p style="text-align: center;">Long term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creating investment (soft outcome as well as hard outcome programmes) ▪ DfES and LSC to revise targets for measuring successful progression to reflect ‘soft’ targets ▪ e2e provision/access programme in college. ▪ Link to hard outcomes ▪ Carry out pre and post analysis to incorporate soft outcomes – on ILR.

Conclusions	Implications	Other Implications	Actions
Funding – what does not work	For LSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resources – expense! ▪ What is an acceptable NEET level? ▪ Is all NEET a problem? ▪ Personal development opportunities – year out travelling ▪ Sharing of information ▪ GOSE to prepare papers to inform SE Regional NEETS Group (next meeting in May) to help identify issues, possible solution, evidence 	<p style="text-align: center;">Short term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LSDA write up the presentation as case studies – share good practice around the region ▪ Dissemination events should be targeted at Senior Managers – with budgets ▪ SHARE GOOD PRACTICE!!
	For all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sharing of information ▪ Partnership working ▪ Systematic and transparent MI and payment system ▪ Piecemeal approaches ▪ Lack of sustainability 	

Conclusions	Implications	Other Implications	Actions
Causes of NEET	For LSC	Social implications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Peer pressure ▪ Culture/attitude of community ▪ Level differentiation initial bonus ▪ Funding of incentives ▪ Financial prevention incentive 	Short term LSC to fund 'upfront' to allow resource changes Long term LSC to recognise the need to increase funding to 'get to' the whole NEET cohort
	For learning providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quick and effective learning providers adapt to market needs ▪ Funding incentives for learning providers ▪ Additional funding for prevention under 16's 	
	For Connexions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaborative working to identify parents and provide information and adult training opportunities ▪ Incentive to adults ▪ Schools cascade 	