

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIFELONG LEARNING



JOINT WORKING GROUP REPORT INTO NEETS

NOT IN EDUCATION EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING

2008



Making a difference where you live

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DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP REPORT

NOT IN EDUCATION EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING (NEETs)

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FOREWORD BY COUNCILLOR ALAN BARKER



The future of our society depends on the education we provide to our young people. We need to make sure that all young people start adult life with the skills, qualities and attributes they will need to make a success of their lives. Never before has it been as important as it is today for every young person to achieve a good level of skill – for young people themselves, for the economy and for society.

It is no longer a sensible option for a young person to leave education for good at 16 in order to seek work. The great majority of young people already do stay on beyond 16 and there is a risk that it will only be the more vulnerable and lower-achieving who drop out at 16. Yet they are precisely the group who has the greatest need to stay on – so that they can achieve useful skills which will prepare them for life. The time has come to consider whether society is letting these young people down by allowing them to leave education and training for good at 16, knowing that they are not adequately prepared for life.

I would like to thank my District councillor colleagues who worked with me on this overview and scrutiny exercise. This has been a collaborative exercise that focussed on what is best for the young people in our society who are not in education, employment or training. There will be no surprise in what we have to recommend. Time and time again issues of joint planning, integrated delivery and the need to make best use of resource come to the fore.

Finally, I began this process reflecting on what I refer to as the 4 “C”s that deliver good outcomes – the need to be Corporate, Comprehensive, Complimentary and Coordinated. At the end of this exercise I realise that 4 more “C”s need to be added – Commission Communicate, Champion, and Contract.

Organisations need to respond to make this real.

Cllr Alan Barker
Chair
Scrutiny Sub-Committee for the Development of Lifelong Learning

BACKGROUND

The Children Act 2004 set out the Government's agenda for the development and direction of Children's Services in the future. It involved integrating and co-ordinating all services for children, young people and their families by bringing together a number of key stakeholders who impact on children and young people for example the NHS, Local Authority Social Services, Education and others.

The Act charges Local Authorities with leading the necessary changes, and consequently to help achieve this, Durham County Council works in partnership with the County Durham Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (Children's Executive Board) to develop what is needed for the future.

Through consultation in County Durham, five key outcomes were agreed that are believed to be essential to the development and well-being of children and young people. In County Durham it is the aim for all children, young people and their families to:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

In order to deliver on this agenda key partners come together under a Children's Trust Board to plan, commission and deliver as appropriate an agenda that is informed by a strategic direction of "Every Child Matters".

As part of the governance framework in place for the Children's Trust, it was agreed that a Joint Overview and Scrutiny arrangement should be put in place to hold to account and provide challenge to the partnership.

The model adopted has been informed the successful Joint Overview and Scrutiny Health Sub-Committee that has as its focus the NHS and health and well being.

A major priority for the Children Trust is NEET's, 16-19 year olds known to be **Not** in **E**ducation, **E**mployment or **T**rainig. This priority lends itself well to challenge as NEET`s in County Durham are an issue that need addressing.

A Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working Group was established, with Members from Durham County Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and representatives from the District Councils overview and scrutiny arrangements coming together to "scrutinise" NEET`s.

PROJECT TERMS OF REFERENCE

The purpose of the joint working group, as well as establishing partnership working across county and district councils, was to consider the actions that needed to be taken to ensure that young people in County Durham enjoy a better opportunity to participate in the labour market and ultimately contribute to their

economic well-being. The joint working group also investigated what actions needed to be taken to retain young people in education and or training post 16.

The NEETs project would also act as a pilot for overview and scrutiny and support the development of scrutiny arrangements for the Children's Trust Executive Board.

With this in mind, the joint working group wanted to ensure that they were outcome focused and would provide challenge by setting the following terms of reference that look at the key themes surrounding the issue of NEETs namely:-

- To seek solutions that will increase the number of young people in County Durham who are in Education, Employment and Training;
- To better understand the barriers and opportunities to retain young people in education post 16;
- To consider interventions that reduce the number of young people aged 10-16 who are at risk of becoming NEET;
- To identify those young people who are currently NEET in finding and making links to achieve economic well-being;
- To engage with employers to seek opportunities that would enable them to create employment opportunities;
- To consider what support is available to both individuals (NEET) and employers that will enable them to have a relationship;
- To understand the issues associated with being NEET;
- To have a better understanding of the choices available for sustainable vocational opportunities;
- To assess the delivery of services through 3rd tier (voluntary and community sector) to increase access into employment education and training;
- To explore strategic approaches through the LAA that impact on NEET and that deliver solutions;
- To consider the nature of preventative services for young people who are NEET;
- To consider effective interventions aimed at families that enable them to support their children;
- To explore mechanisms that support transition and understand what these are?

APPROACH

The Joint Working Group agreed to take evidence from key witnesses involved directly and indirectly in improving the NEET situation. They also agreed to receive correspondence, meet with relevant parties and young people to ensure members fully understood and received evidence on this matter before reaching any conclusions or making any recommendations.

The following people gave evidence to the joint working group:-

Amanda Johnson	Head of Extended Services Children and Young People Services, Durham County Council
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Janice Bray	Executive Director Connexions County Durham
Carole Payne	Strategic Commissioning Manager Children and Young Peoples Services (CYP), County Durham Council
Linda Bailey	Director Learning and Skills Council, Durham
Margaret Bell	14-19 Partnership Director
Paul Kelly	Derwentside Education and Training
Maureen Clare	Head of Access & Inclusion Services CYP
Marian Goodyear	New College Durham
Fred Harrison	East Durham and Houghall College
Julie Rimmer	14-19 Partnership Curriculum Co-ordinator/ CYPS BETT Consultant
Phil Young	Esh Group
Rod Varley	North East Construction Employment Integrator
Susan Errington	Derwentside College
Nick Brewster	Bishop Auckland College
Vivien Willey	Acting Director, Service Direct
Ann Cant	South West Durham Training Ltd
Kelly Al-Sundukchi	North East Chamber of Commerce
John Deller	Director, Beyond Expectations (BETT)
Heather Milburn	Derwentside College
Tabatha Tilley	Investing in Children, Durham County Council
Jane Le Sage	Access Services Manager, CYP, Durham County Council
Linda Thornton	Head of Human Resources, Service Direct, Durham County Council
Kate Welch	ACUMEN TRUST
Susan Dolphin	Transition Key Manager, CYP
Caroline Taukulis	CDDC
Greg Johnson	CDDC
Angela Wilkinson	JobCentre Plus

REPORTING

The joint working group agreed to report, in the first instance, to the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee on its findings then to Durham County Councils Corporate Management Team, Children's Executive Board and Cabinet with its recommendations requesting Cabinet to respond to these recommendations via an action plan.

NOTE: These reporting arrangements will need to change to reflect local government reorganisation.

MEMBERSHIP OF JOINT WORKING GROUP

The membership of the joint working group was drawn from the County Council and District Councils scrutiny members respectively.

Councillor Alan Barker (Durham County Council) chaired the joint working group.

The following Councillors were invited to meetings: Councillors G Armstrong (Chester-le-Street District Council), J Armstong (Durham County Council), J Buckham (Wear Valley District Council), G Burlinson (Durham County Council), T Cooke (Teesdale District Council), P Crathorne (Sedgefield Borough Council), A Hopgood (Durham District Council), A Laing (Easington District Council), L Marshall (Derwentside District Council), P Stradling (Durham County Council) and M Simmons (Durham County Council).

METHODOLOGY

A detailed project plan for all the joint working group meetings was developed. (See appendix 1). The plan, in effect, is a scoping document that identifies who attended the meetings and the nature of the evidence they gave.

The joint working group held a total of eight meetings between November 2007 and April 2008.

All these meetings were held in County Hall with 'expert' witnesses invited to give evidence in relation to the terms of reference.

Information was also gathered from a number of young people from the Investing in Children Group. The idea being the young people from the Investing in Children initiative would facilitate the involvement of other young people in order to involve them in the exercise and gain an insight, first hand, of the issues facing young people who are approaching decisions around employment, further education or training. (See appendix 6)

Members of the joint overview and scrutiny working group also had access to an expert advisor, the Executive Director from the Connexions Service, who was able to provide policy advice and information on the issues and challenges facing young people who are NEET. This was a valuable resource that helped members think through some of the issues and helped clarify what is possible and achievable to deliver on a NEET's challenge.

WHO ARE THE NEETS?

The NEET Group is a classification of young people between 16-18 year olds who are known not to be in education, employment or training. The group is not static but rapidly changing as most young people do not spend long periods as NEET. Not all young people in the NEET group are available for EET as some have long term illnesses that prevent participation, others may be caring for their own children or siblings/parents. Young people in the NEET group also keep in touch, mainly with the Connexions service on a regular basis. This is different to young people whose current activity is not known as they are not keeping in touch with agencies.

Nationally research (Office for National Statistics) has shown that among the characteristics of this diverse group of NEETs, persistent absentees are seven times more likely to be doing nothing aged 16 than those who have had regular school attendance; those with learning difficulties or disabilities are also twice as likely to be NEET. The NEET group also includes an estimated 20,000 teenage mothers but the gender gap is widening with boys now more than twice as likely as girls not to be in EET. Having said this, there is a diverse range of backgrounds of young people who are NEET, including some well qualified young people who have found post 16 learning not meeting their particular needs.

Researchers for the then Department for Education and Skills came up with various characteristics of young people who were likely to become NEET:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Angry Young Rebels: | Against the System and hostile to authority. Can be attracted to college course that offer opportunities to success. |
| Quitters: | Believe they have tried and failed. Any reaction from hostility to passivity. |
| Rebels without a Cause: | Impatient but believe their personality will be their success. Not hostile to teachers but keen to get out of education and start earning money. |
| Cool Dudes: | Life is to be lived and school gets in the way. Underachievers but not hostile and seen as lazy by teachers. |
| Hedgers: | Disaffected but in touch. Generally positive but wait to commit on their GCSE results. Mentoring can help to realign their aspirations. |
| Settlers: | Sit between Cool Dudes and Quitters. Group that masks a fear of failure. |

Escapists: Dream of being discovered. Disengaged and disconnected. Vocational and occupational options may reengage them.

Strugglers: Want to do well but unrealistic. Positive and eager to get on. Low ability need to be offered course at 14-16 at appropriate level in order to succeed.

The National Policy Context

The NEET group is not homogenous. There is a diverse range of young people in the group with quite different characteristics:-

- the NEET group is getting older – around half of those NEET are of academic age 18, compared with just 40% 5 years ago;
 - the gender gap is widening – 16 year old boys are now more than twice as likely to be NEET as 16 year old girls;
 - a higher proportion of young people are ‘inactive’ and are not looking for work or learning;
 - 39% of those with no GCSEs are NEET at 16, compared to 2% of 16 year olds who attained 5 or more A* – C GCSEs;
 - persistent absentees are 7 times more likely to be NEET at age 16;
 - young people with learning difficulties and disabilities are twice as likely to be NEET as those without;
 - an estimated 20,000 teenage mothers are NEET.
- (source: Reducing the proportion of 16–18 year olds NEET: The Strategy)

In March 2007, the then Education Secretary, Alan Johnson, published a Green Paper *Raising expectations: staying in education and training post-16*. The 12-week consultation period included a range of events, including regional conferences and focus groups, seeking the views of particular groups, including young people in year 5 (the first cohort to be affected) and their parents, and those not in education, employment or training (NEET). There was widespread acceptance that young people would benefit from remaining in formal education or training until 18, accompanied by a recognition of the need to ensure that the system is set up to deliver effectively, and that the right provision and support is made available for all young people to participate in a worthwhile way. There was also some concern about the principle of compulsion.

In June, Ed Balls was appointed as Secretary of State for the new Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), and has made raising the participation age to 18 a priority. The latest document, *Raising expectations: staying in employment and training post-14 – from policy to legislation*, published on 5 November, describes the way forward, emphasising the need for ‘everyone in the system to play their part to provide better for all young people’. In the Foreword, Ed Balls writes that,

“.....Changes in technology and trade, the rapid growth of emerging economies and the rise of high-tech industries bring huge opportunities, but also new challenges. It is our responsibility to ensure that every young person is equipped to face these challenges and seize these opportunities...The demands of the economy, and our ambition for social justice, mean that we must do more. We need excellence in education and training not just for some but for all young people”.

In March 2008 government issued a white paper called “Raising Expectations: enabling the system to deliver for young people and adults”.

In this they state:

“.....We want every 16 and 17 year-old to participate in education or training, and we want every adult to have the chance to improve their skills in order to find work or progress in their current employment. The changing nature of the world economy makes increasing participation in education and training an urgent necessity.”

The report goes on to say that for 14-19 year-olds government aims to build on the success of the current system while enabling local authorities to drive increased achievement in every local area.

Governments preferred approach has four key features:

- Local authorities will discharge their responsibilities to provide a place in learning for every young person through strategic commissioning.
- Local authorities will cluster together in sub-regional groupings reflecting travel-to-learn patterns to commission provision for young people across the wider local area.
- This will be supplemented by a slim national Young People’s Learning Agency, which will have responsibilities for budgetary control and for securing coherence in the event that agreement cannot be reached locally.
- There should be progressive devolution of power and authority to the sub-regional level as the collaborative arrangements become stronger, successful and more formal.

It suggests that Local authorities will judge demand for different forms of provision, and the extent to which the available supply meets that demand and makes a full reality of the new entitlements to Diplomas, Apprenticeships and the Foundation Learning Tier. That they will then decide where to commission more provision, where to expand the best provision to fill gaps, and where to remove the least effective provision. In doing so, they will aim to make the new entitlements available in full to all young people at the highest possible standard.

The proposed reforms will restore to local authorities a significant relationship with (and accountability for) FE colleges after more than 15 years. They will give councils the clear strategic lead for 14-19 education and training, enabling real integration of provision between schools, colleges (sixth-form and FE) and employers as they jointly offer the new range of Diplomas and Apprenticeships alongside GCSEs and other qualifications which are an integral part of raising the age of compulsory participation in education and training to 18. This will require greatly increased collaboration between a range of bodies at all levels, and there remains a lot of detail to be decided during the course of the consultation.

Based on this, and as part of its Children and Young People’s Plan, the local authority will produce a commissioning plan for young people’s learning. When it

has been agreed, it will provide the basis for funding allocation. Funding will follow the learner's choice and comparable funding will be provided for comparable provision within a national funding formula, which will continue on a very similar basis to the current formula. Local authorities will be funded according to the institutions which are in their area – not according to where young people live.

In April 2008 all Connexions' service delivery will be devolved to local delivery led by local authorities.

The white paper is an important development in the process of responding to young people who are NEET. It is timely in that it will reinforce the issues raised through the overview and scrutiny process with suggestions from government on what is necessary to support people out of NEET.

Towards the end of March 2008 government (DCSF) issued a strategy – “Reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training” in order to address:

- what more can be done to ensure that a robust tracking system is in place to identify those who are NEET or at risk of becoming so;
- at what more can be done to make sure there is suitable learning provision in every part of the country to meet the needs of all young people;
- that every young person has access to the guidance and support they need;
- that there are clear incentives in place for all young people who do become NEET, particularly those who have been out of work or learning for some time, to re-engage as quickly as possible.

NOTE: In England, although responsibility for young people NEET delivery straddles many departments and agencies at national, regional and local levels, the DCSF has the sole remit for delivery of the young people NEET target to reduce the proportion of 16-18 year olds considered to be NEET by two percentage points by 2010.

DCFS has contracted and funded directly Connexions partnerships to deliver the Public Service Agreement (PSA) target. The PSA target was to reduce NEETs to 10.5% by November 2007-January 2008 average. This was achieved at 10.4%. The 2010 PSA target is 8.8%.

Connexions is expected to work with the Local Skills Council (LSC) at a local level to identify the key provision needs required to re-engage young people NEET into education, employment or training.

Finally, on 13 December 2007 the National Audit Office published Partnering for Success: Preparing to deliver 14-19 reforms in England. The paper

examines the progress that local 14-19 partnerships are making in preparing to deliver the reforms across England. One of the recommendations of the 14-19 plan is to reduce the reliance on short term funding. The ideal situation would be sustainable funding for projects but pulling away from short term funding activities is difficult. The development of a business plan was cited as a potential way to move this forward.

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group welcome the governments proposals in the white paper "Raising Expectations: enabling the system to deliver for young people and adults" and its NEETs strategy. Both are complementary with the evidence and conclusions reached from the scrutiny exercise.

What is clear from this policy directive is the important role local authorities will be given as strategic commissioners responding to the needs of young people who are NEET.

Secondly, that the National Audit Office paper "Partnering for Success: Preparing to deliver 14-19 reforms in England" identifies an important recommendation with regard to 14-19 year olds and that is to reduce the reliance on short term funding to deliver on this agenda.

The Local Policy Context

NEETS in COUNTY DURHAM

OVERVIEW

At the end of March 2008, 75.8% [12574] of 16-18 year olds were known to be in learning.

[NB Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) definition of learning excludes employment with no training, temporary or part time employment, and young people having a GAP year]

1462 16-18 year olds were known not to be in education, employment or training, and the activities of a further 543 were not confirmed. These numbers respectively represent 10.7% and 3.7% of 16-18 year olds.

The target for 'Not Known' young people is under 9% each month. When compared with February 2008, this represents a reduction of 41 from the NEETs and 78 from the not confirmed, which is not reflected in the percentage which has, in fact, risen by 0.1%.

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATIONS

Lord Leitch's Review of Skills made clear that there has been a general increase in skills requirements, with more jobs requiring high levels of skills and fewer low skilled jobs; and the regional pattern for NEET shows that the highest levels are in areas which have lost traditional industries like coal mining or ship building. This changing economic situation means that it is more important than ever for young people to stay in learning and achieve in order to be able to succeed in the labour market.

The highest percentage of NEET young people is in Easington [13.5% or 359 young people] and the lowest in Durham and Chester-le-Street [8.1% or 344 young people]. While the variation in percentages appears high, it should be noted that this amounts to a difference of only 15 young people. Attached at appendix 2 is an external performance report by area with information on 16-18 year olds who are NEET and the Local Area Agreement target for 2006/07 and 2007/08.

AGE PROFILE

Of the 1462 young people known to be NEET, 1153 [78.9%] are available to the labour market. 309 young people are not available mainly as a consequence of long term illness, pregnancy, caring for their own child or caring for others.

This means that there are 1153 young people who are available. Of these, the largest numbers [516] are 17 year olds, the vast majority of whom have had one or more experiences of learning.

A further 421 are 18 years old. This leaves 216 16 year olds, most of who have been in some form of learning since leaving school in summer 2007.

This pattern of the age of young people who are NEET is consistent: few of the NEETs are school leavers and the majority have had post 16 learning experiences. The occurrence of being 'NEET' increases with age.

GENDER

The gender balance of young people who are NEET in County Durham has changed: for a long time it reflected the national situation whereby young men represented 66% of NEETs.

The gender balance is now much more even with marginal differences between the genders, within the total NEET group. When we examine the numbers available for employment, education and training, then we see a significant drop among young women due to pregnancy or caring responsibility. Of those who are not available as a consequence of long term illness, there are almost equal numbers.

In summary there are more young men who are NEET, and available for/considering employment, education or training.

PREFERENCES

Young people who are NEET mainly want jobs. They will consider training or education if there is a good chance of leading to a job. Despite the advice and guidance of education/learning/skills professionals, many young people are more interested in earning a wage. The exit of many young people into jobs that offer no planned training or qualifications is increasing despite national and local drives to increase the skills levels and knowledge of our actual and potential workforce.

ACTIVITY SURVEY 2007

The 2007 Activity Survey continues to show an upward trend in the proportion of school leavers who progress into continued education and learning. A total of 6493 clients are included in the Activity Survey for Year 11 leavers in 2007, with 75.1% staying in full-time education either at college or school sixth form. This is an **increase** of 2.5% from 2006. If clients in independent schools are taken out of the totals 74.5% have progressed into full-time education. Of the total number progressing into education 15.6% are attending institutions outside of County Durham, with the largest number attending colleges in Darlington. This is slightly lower than in 2006 (15.9%).

Clients who are not settled total 8.4% - this includes clients who are unemployed, sick, pregnant teenagers, young mothers and those who are either on part-time courses at college, in part-time employment or taking part in Personal Development Opportunities. This is a **reduction** from 2006 (10.1%). Appendix 3 presents information on the 2007 Activity survey.

STRATEGY FOR 14-19 YEAR OLDS

Despite continuing reduction in the percentage of young people who are known not to be in education, employment or training, over 1500 young people each

month are NEET. Significant resources have been deployed to address factors in order to prevent young people becoming NEET at 16, and a wider range of provision is available 16-18 to attract young people into fulltime learning. A detailed Action Plan has been produced, which is monitored quarterly. County Durham remains one of the 20 'hotspot' areas nationally. Sustained reduction is required to achieve the Nov-Jan 2010 target of 8.8%. This will be achieved by a range of activities including preventative work with young people pre-16, support for transitions to post 16 learning, improved retention of young people on programmes for 16-18 year olds, and greater opportunities provided by employers to enable young people to continue their training in vocational areas.

The County Durham 14-19 Partnership have developed a draft '14-19 Increasing Participation in Employment Education and Training Action Plan' designed to address issues and develop joined up approaches to NEET issues. The action plan is attached at Appendix 4 of this report. The plan is informed by a number of key principles that focus on identifying "what works", in order to have a positive impact on the existing activities of organisations/agencies in increasing young people to become EET.

The Plan focuses on six major theme areas:

1. Data management, policy and provision planning
2. NEET Preventative work
3. Supporting Transition
4. NEET Re-engagement work
5. Specialist Support
6. Involving young people, their parents/carers and communities

Key partners within County Durham including LSC, Children's Services Authority, Connexions County Durham, LSPs and Health Trusts have come together and now need to be committed to the strategy and work together if targets set centrally are to be met. The Action Plan is still very much in development and the success of this development work and ownership is dependant of partners taking responsibility for the actions identified in the plan.

The Increasing Participation Group (sub group of the 14-19 Partnership) has brought together most of the above partners and is making links with the remainder via Local Children's Boards.

All partner agencies are signed up to the Children's Plan thus avoiding duplication of work and leaving few gaps. The Children's Plan has been reviewed for the first time and from this review a set of key improvement priorities have been formulated with NEETs confirmed as a top priority.

Within County Durham areas have different local problems which the Local Children's Boards tailored services to fit accordingly. Local profiles were developed through the gathering and collation of information and local data including a children's survey. This would allow for benchmarking and the development of area plans by local Children's Boards. This would enable the

influencing of children and making a real difference with tailored future activity and integrated family support services.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group recognise the scale of the problem and note that what is needed is a partnership approach with partners taking full responsibility for the strategy and actions.

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group recommend, in line with government thinking on this issue, that the new Durham County Council working through their Children's Trusts, 14-19 partnerships, with employers, the County Durham Economic Partnership and the Learning and Skills Council take a lead role in putting together a strategic commissioning plan for young people who are NEET.

This strategic commissioning plan should identify targeted investment and intensive support based on need and build on the range of projects and activities that exist across County Durham already in support of the NEET challenge.

A key component of the strategic commissioning plan should be to invest in what works informed by an evaluation of the range of projects and activities in place.

Finally, encourage partners to adopt the concept of the 8 "C"s that will enable a step change in planning ,delivery and impact on communities:

- Commissioned - based on need;
- Coordinated – maximise use of resource and avoid duplication of effort;
- Comprehensive – person centered /holistic;
- Complimentary – builds on what we know works;
- Communicated – information on best practice is shared and acted upon;
- Contracted – is delivered and performance managed accordingly;
- Corporate and Collaborative – is planned as part of the whole system
- Champion – delivers the community leadership responsibility.

MAIN FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW

Barriers & Opportunities to post-16 education

School Sixth Forms Background

There are 15 schools with 6th form provision in County Durham. The size of sixth forms ranged from 51 to 283 learners in 2007, with the exception of Gillesgate Sixth Form Centre with 960 16-18 learners.

The outcomes from the 6th forms are captured via an average point score (point scores relate to the student achievement in A levels and equivalent). For example for Durham School 6th forms (2007) is 691.0, with a range from 502.5 to 857.2, the average for England being 731.1 (includes all post 16 providers including FE). (701.5 in 2006).

Most learners in school sixth forms follow a programme of GCE A levels, Applied A levels, L3 BTECS or OCR National Diplomas. There is some limited Level 2 provision in 2/3 of sixth forms. The majority of learners in school 6th forms have been students at the school from 11-16, with the exception of Gilegate, where the intake is largely from east Durham.

Between 2004/5 and 2005/6, the percentage of learners leaving school sixth forms at a point during year 12 or at the end of year 12 ranged from 3% to 56% across the Sixth forms. In some cases, these learners accessed other learning or training provision or employment quickly however a small though significant number became NEET for a period of time. From September 2005 to January 2008, 378 learners became NEET, after leaving School Sixth forms, 86 (23%) upon completion of their studies. Of the remainder, 204, 54% stated that they left because they did not like the programme/school.

Connexions data and discussions with Heads of Sixth Form, through the Sixth Form Network, identified the pressure points when learners are most likely to drop out of their programmes as December, January, March, June. This is linked to :-

- modular assessment in January and June which may indicate less than satisfactory progress and little chance of achieving course outcomes.
- learning programmes not meeting student expectations
- part time job opportunities causing tension (and some full time)
- financial constraints e.g. transport costs

Intervention Strategies

There are a range of intervention strategies that aim to support young people from becoming NEET.

- There is a duty for Sixth Form schools to inform Connexions when learners leave or are at risk of dropping out/having difficulties. However, Connexions contracts think this might be because contacts with School Sixth forms vary. Some Connexions Personal Advisors are based in schools for a period of time e.g. 1 day per week. This has improved the timely access to this service in these providers. It should be noted that schools are developing their referral systems.
- Over the past 5 years about a third of Sixth Form, usually the larger Sixth Forms, have introduced additional capacity to support Sixth Form learner's e.g. guidance managers, learning coordinators being appointed and Aim Higher mentors.
- Extended preparation for Sixth Form with taster classes, induction weeks, study workshops and parent/carer information sessions to assist learners in making informed choices.
- The Heads of Sixth Form network has provided the opportunity to share good practice e.g. –role of guidance manager, bridging transition in learning and induction programmes and procedures.
- Post Inspection Action Plan Funding (Nov 2007-March 2008) has provided the opportunity for 4 school Sixth Form to pilot further intervention strategies e.g.
 - Early identification of “at risk of leaving ” and links to Key stage 4 mentor support programmes to ensure continuity of support;
 - Mentor/guidance support staff to track and provide intervention activity, liaise with other agencies, connexions, and implement engagement/ HE activities linked to Aim Higher Programme;
 - Laptop lease scheme to provide learners with facilities needed for independent study;
 - Bespoke learning support for identified learners.
- Introduction of vocational courses to provide progression routes for an evolving key stage 4 curriculum. Most Sixth Forms now have some vocationally related programmes on offer.
- The breadth of curriculum under offer is being expanded through the development of shared/joint provision between some providers. This increased choice of programme provides greater flexibility for the learner.
- The **BETT, LSN** Support for teachers delivering new and existing qualifications to ensure high quality delivery brokered through audit of outcomes.

Some of the Issues that need to be taken into account

- Tension between appropriate courses offered to learners and the need to recruit to institutions to maintain numbers (falling rolls) to ensure economic viability ;
- The timely development of appropriate progression routes within school sixth forms as key stage 4 curriculum changes are embedded;
- Improvement in Information, Advice and Guidance to ensure students make appropriate choices for post 16;
- Changes in A level assessment in 2008 may impact on pattern of leaving; assessment windows are fewer throughout the year, there is greater stretch and challenge in the A2 course. Teachers are being supported by subject networks to ensure a smooth transition to new programmes;
- Data – The learner achievement tracker provides the opportunity to track and analyse performance more effectively at school and course level. At an individual level, learners and staff are able to match student and learner programme more accurately, taking potential outcome into consideration and to identify where intervention is needed at an earlier stage;
- Financial constraints for learners. Recent surveys in the sixth forms suggest that around 45% of Year 12 and 70% of Year 13 students have part time jobs. The samples indicated about 5% have full time jobs. Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) provides only partial support to some students and none to many students. Changed post 16 transport policy is an issue for some learners linked to rising transport costs.

Barriers to post-16 education

There are a number of reasons ranging from a personal to a participative level that can severely impact upon young people's ability to undertake structured education in a post-16 environment.

Young people drop out of school/college or have little contact with formal education post-14 for a variety of reasons and these have impacted on their ability to undertake a rigid and highly structured programme such as employment or full time education. Many of the **social and personal** issues that are faced by these young people are:

- Homelessness
- Domestic Violence
- Mental Health Issues
- Drugs & Alcohol
- Severe Behavioral Issues relating to family/personal circumstances
- Learning Difficulties
- Low Self Esteem and Confidence
- Basic Skills Issues
- Victims/Perpetrators of Abuse.

Young people from the **Investing in Children** (Investing in Children is about promoting the human rights of children and young people in the North East of England. There are a universal project concerned with the rights of all children and young people. Investing in Children works to support young people to be involved in democratic processes and their voices heard), interviewed as part of the review process, indicated that poor advice, support and guidance from schools left many young people unsure of how to progress post-16. There was consent that much of the curriculum offered within sixth forms was inappropriate. (See appendix 6)

This view was echoed by representatives from the **FE Colleges**, of which the full response is at Appendix (5) of this report, stating that there was no universal information, advice and guidance (IAG) service available to all young people who are heavily dependent on school and parents to provide advice about choices at 14 and 16.

FE Colleges also maintained that there was a continued assumption, by schools, that vocational learning was associated with low achievement and that many such courses offered in sixth forms were taught by non-specialists and ultimately failed to meet young people's expectations.

FE colleges suggest:

- That protocols and procedures are agreed so that information about young people can be shared between responsible bodies and agencies with the need to access the relevant information;

- That innovative and flexible learning programmes designed to meet the needs of young people in the NEET group are properly supported through mainstream funding;
- That funding for the provision of vocational learning post-14 be 'ring fenced' and spent only for that purpose;
- That a NEETs' Task Force be established which will be responsible for delivering on the targets in the plan. NOTE: - The 14-19 Partnership Increasing Participation Group (sub-group of the 14-19 Partnership) has already been convened to encourage partners (CYPS, LSC, FE, Schools, Work-based learning providers and wider partners) to work together on this agenda.

Clearly a great deal is going on. It is important that measures need to be in place which will ensure a more co-ordinated approach. The wider communication of the "Increasing Participation Action Plan" and the processes which are now in place to capture activity, progress, outcomes and good practice through the 14-19 Partnership website will help to achieve this. The success of this however is dependent on all partners and agencies actively engaging in the process.

Non mainstream provision is planned to meet a variety of needs and young people should have opportunity to access the provision that most suits their own personal needs. This may mean that they move between programmes as a progression. The success of these interventions is reliant on the quality of the information advice and guidance given to the young person.

It is also difficult for colleges to access the details of young people who are classified as NEET, primarily due to data protection issues, making it impossible to contact them directly or develop strategies and interventions based on local data and knowledge. Currently all contact with NEETs is provided through the Connexions Service.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group note the barriers and the opportunities to post 16 education and welcome the range of interventions available to support young people stay in education.

At the heart of all of this is the need for a strategic commissioning plan to support young people into education, employment and training with total buy in from partners to make this happen.

- The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group recommend that a review of the quality of Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) offered to 14-19 year olds, that enable them to make choices about their future, is undertaken as a matter of urgency.
- Secondly that the new Durham County Council and its partners consider

transport costs to sixth forms, colleges and work based learning establishments for all post 16 year olds with a view to alleviating the financial implications of transport to a centre of learning.

- Thirdly, that the suggestion from our FE colleges to develop protocols and procedures so that information about young people in learning can be shared between responsible bodies and agencies so that learners don't fall through the net but are tracked and supported into learning be developed.

Opportunities to post-16 education

While the NEET issue is extremely important it is worth noting that the number of young people staying on in education and training is increasing. The challenge is to ensure that young people remain in EET given the variety of social and personal issues involved and the little regard given to the value of qualifications.

The **Learning and Skills Council (LSC)** key targets for young people are – to increase the proportion of young people achieving a level 2 at age 18 and level 3 by the age of 19, the LSC recognises that this will only be achieved by increasing the number of young people participating in learning and supporting the delivery agreement to increase the number of children and young people on the path to success. This specific delivery target being to reduce the percentage of 16-18 year olds classified as NEET. The LSC work closely with their delivery partners to plan the mix and balance of provision available in FE and as previously outlined on E2E programmes, in order to achieve these targets from pre- entry level.

Learners identified as especially vulnerable are supported through the **Targeted Improvements in Retention and Achievements (TIRA)** project funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Young people at risk of becoming NEET in FE Colleges are given specialist support including:

- Anger Management
- Behaviour Support
- Personal, Social and Interpersonal Development
- Study Skills
- Developing Self Esteem and Confidence.

The aim is to provide a comprehensive programme of support to participants and at December 2007 of the 238 young people identified for additional support, 122 had completed their learning aim with 114 achieving a positive outcome on leaving the TIRA project.

The **Preparation for Progression (P4P)** programme engages young people who are NEET and works with them and enables them to take the next steps into training and learning through individual plans. The programme was funded in 2006/07 through ESF co-financing and has now been extended into 2008 with LSC/Post Inspection Action Plan funding and will target 80 young people who are NEET.

The LSC provides a **Local Initiative Development Fund (LIDF)** funding to the County Durham Learning Provider Network for the 'Moving On' project aimed at young people who are NEET.

Moving on – Right Directions engages with young people who are apprenticeship ready and aims to get them an interview with an employer or training provider.

Moving on – Into Employment is aimed at anyone NEET who wants employment. The project since commencement in January 2008 has had 91

referrals with 6 successful outcomes. Funding is due to come to an end in mid-April 2008.

Further LSC funding has been made available to pilot four programmes of learning aimed at pregnant teenagers and teenage parents who are NEET. This has been developed in collaboration with Sure Start County Durham.

All four FE College offer flexible start dates, New College Durham's 'Choices Plus' is an example which in-fills young people into existing provision. As well as this New College Durham and Bishop Auckland College provide an 'Offenders in the Community' programme involving young people attending 30 hour courses across the County.

The Government's Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is a positive financial incentive that has allowed many young people to continue to participate with employment training or education. While it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of EMA's it can help cover some of the costs of transport, equipment and books. It should be noted that a National Evaluation Report conducted in November 2007 to assess the impact of EMA in participation, retention and achievement in post-16 education reported that "the introduction of EMA had a positive and statistically significant effect on participation in post compulsory education."

Reducing the risks to young people 10-16 becoming NEET

The position of pre and post-16 education is very different with no statutory requirement for young people to be engaged in education after 16 although the Education and Skills Bill currently being considered by Parliament will result in all young people being required to remain in some kind of learning until they are 18.

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny working group has identified many of the issues associated with and strategies in place to engage young people in post-16 education or vocational training. What is important with all of this is identifying and supporting young people and those most at risk from disengagement at an early age .

- **Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme**

In 2006/07 15 schools across County Durham were involved in a DCFS funded pilot programme which provided personalised learning for over 250 young people with an emphasis on the development of personal, social and functional skills.

Indications from data are that 87% of the year 11 young people on the programme progressed into EET. The programme is set to continue through 2007/08 with LSC funding for 350 young people although there are currently 470 on the programme.

- **Durham 1000 Programme 2005-2007**

European Social Funding resulted in a collaborative partnership across the County supporting young people in years 10 and 11 who were identified as at risk of underachieving and not making the transition at 16 into further learning, training or employment.

The project ran from September 2005 to December 2007 and involved 48 schools, special school and alternative education establishments. Young people were supported by a mentor and Individual Learning Plans as well as alternative accredited qualifications and Connexions Personal Advisor support. Of the 1013 young people on the programme, 694 (67%) moved into post-16 education and training and 151 (15%) moved into employment. The funding for this programme is due to end in March 2008.

- **Young Apprenticeship**

Currently 9 schools are working in partnership with colleges and training providers delivering a Young Apprenticeship programme to young people in years 10 and 11 across a range of occupational areas. The programme has grown in popularity from 90 young people commencing the 2006 programme to 190 young people for the 2007 scheme.

- **New Diplomas**

As part of the national 14-19 strategy, by 2013 every young person in school or college will be entitled to pursue any one of the 17 Diploma programmes at an appropriate level for them, wherever they are in the country. It was accepted that there was considerable work to be done to ensure the number and content of courses were available to complement employment opportunities.

Colleges and Work based Learning Providers are working closely with schools in the development of Diplomas and Diploma partnerships. The 17 Diploma 'Lines' are due to be available to all 14-19 year olds as part of the 'learner entitlement'. One Diploma, Engineering, based in Derwentside and involving Derwentside College schools and the Derwentside Engineering Forum, will begin in September 2008.

The successful delivery of Diplomas will require effective management of the process through the leadership of the Local Authority and the dedication to partnership working across the whole 14-19 Partnership.

- **Increased Flexibility Programme (IFP)**

Since 2001 the support for IFP has been discrete funding made available from the Department and in 2002 through the LSC. This funding was made available to four partnerships in County Durham who have delivered a very successful programme and have reported that they now have a well

established programme of activities developed with feedback from schools, students and inspectors proving very positive.

From September 2007 the funding for this type of activity was routed via Local Authorities and was included in the DSG with an expectation from the Department that there would be no reduction in this type of work related activity. In order to facilitate this transition period the LSC North East made funding available to the four County Durham IF Partnerships, to support a further cohort of learners, on the understanding that partners work together to ensure future delivery. The LA further committed to support the Partnerships to 60% of the funding for year two of this cohort. It should be further noted that the delivery of IFP has been heavily subsidised by the Colleges and Work Based Learning Providers.

Concerns have been expressed by the members of the County IF Steering Group, including representatives from schools, that the numbers of young people being able to access this type of Provision in the future would decline if the funding was not 'ring-fenced'. Recent data shows that this is the case.

Schools and colleges through issued guidance have primarily recruited from the cohort of school children likely to gain at least 5 GCSE passes at grades A* - C+. The Increased Flexibility Programme (IFP) is seen by many schools as being for 'lower achievers' and the cohort is still too often constituted largely of those pupils who are deemed likely not to achieve well at GCSE. This picture is beginning to change as vocational options are beginning to improve in popularity through many of the programmes now being implemented in pre-16 education.

Preventative Measures/Services for young people who are NEET (or in danger of becoming)

The NEET group is not homogenous and contains a diverse range of young people with quite different characteristics. There are a number of strategies and measures that are being used to good effect to tackle NEETs and a number of these have already been highlighted within the report.

- **Client Caseload Information System (CCIS)**

Rigorous and effective local tracking, primarily through the CCIS is crucial in reducing the numbers of young people who are NEET. It means that local authorities and their Connexions Services will know which young people are most at risk with their history, needs and characteristics and be able to support them individually.

Annually schools are informed of the specific activities of individual pupils following year 11 studies in order that they can reflect on the relative successes of individuals, groups, and specific programmes, and make adjustments to programmes where more positive outcomes are indicated.

To strengthen this system further the DCFS is to introduce post-16 progression measures which relate to the subsequent achievement of pupils after they have left Year 11. Schools will be judged on how well they have prepared pupils for the next phases of learning. The measure will help evaluate schools IAG services in supporting young people to make choices at 16. This data should be available to schools in 2008.

The tracking system is to be strengthened further by introducing a new requirement for post-16 learning providers to notify Connexions Services as soon as a young person leaves post-16 learning. This will ensure that young people receive support as soon as they drop out of learning and become NEET. In the forthcoming legislation to raise the participation age this new arrangement of notification will become a legal duty for schools and colleges.

- **Foundation Learning Tier (FLT)**

There are 3 strands to the FLT:

- skills for life and work;
- vocational and subject based learning; and
- personal and social development.

It is hoped that these 3 elements of the programme will support young people who have been NEET to both attain and progress. This will be fully implemented by 2010 and the components of E2E will sit within it.

- **Care to Learn (C2L)**

As well as the already mentioned EMA grants young people can access other financial assistance including C2L which provides young parents with financial support to cover the cost of childcare and associated additional transport costs.

- **Activity Agreements**

The DCFS are piloting Activity Agreements in 10 areas, which are specifically aimed at re-engaging 16 and 17 year olds who have been long term NEET. County Durham is a 'control area' against which to benchmark the changes made in Tyne and Wear as a consequence of their being involved in this pilot.

The agreement is a personalised action plan negotiated and agreed with a personal advisor. In return for committing to, and completing, agreed activities to aid reintegration into learning, young people receive a weekly allowance for up to 20 weeks. Emerging findings from the pilots are that this approach is successful in engaging young people who are long term NEET. This will be extended to all NEET 16 and 17 year olds nationally who are in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance to help re-engage and take up their statutory right to appropriate place in education or training, or find a job with training.

- **ABC2 (And Baby Came Too)**

A programme specifically aimed at young parents, both male and female, to help address the barriers to EET and provide support in order for these young people to engage in appropriate EET and thus avoid falling into the NEET category.

Opportunities and Support for Work-Based Learning and Employment

FE Colleges, work based learning organisations and employers provide a number of opportunities for young people to become engaged in training and/or work that provides the chance to learn skills and develop a work ethic for future social and economic well-being. The joint overview and scrutiny working group looked at a number of the major opportunities and support available to young people within this area.

Work based learning organisations raised concerns over the continuation of funding streams to continue many of the projects and the sustainability of such projects was uncertain.

- **Entry to Employment (E2E)**

Paramount to E2E is its location in the 14-19 phase as a high quality pathway in the work-based pathway. It is conceived as a specialist intervention consisting of programmes within an overarching framework, which will respond flexibly to individual need and will offer a range of provision designed to facilitate credible transition and progression opportunities. The programme provides a learning experience through recognising the extent of support and the kind of environment that young people will need in order to make the transition into their next stage of development, whether in education, employment or training. Progression may be to an Apprenticeship or an Advanced Apprenticeship where this is feasible, to other employment-based opportunities, or to further vocational learning. E2E is a roll on roll off programme.

The FE Colleges, alongside other work based training providers, offer apprenticeship training and Entry to Employment Courses (E2E – pre-apprenticeship programmes). Many of the courses commence later in the year to allow young people greater freedom of option and supports many young people who start A-levels but are either not committed or unsuited to such studies.

Further to E2E is the E2E “Bridge It” project run by INCLUDE and provides specialist support to young people who are experiencing emotional and/or behavioural issues which prevent them accessing learning or work programmes. Referrals are provided by Connexions or other E2E providers and this support helps young people progress with their E2E programme or into other learning or work.

- **Roundabout Project**

The Roundabout Project is a dedicated support programme, supported by the 14-19 Partnership, for young people who are in work based learning in County Durham and are potentially about to leave their position or become disengaged. The programme is delivered in partnership with County Durham Learning Provider Network and Connexions.

Referrals to this programme are for a variety of reasons including attendance, attitude, motivation and family issues. The programme has had 182 young people referrals up to October 2007 with 115 positive outcomes, 59 still being supported and 16 reported as being NEET.

As mentioned earlier this particular project is one of a number that is under threat arising from the uncertainty surrounding funding after March 2008.

This programme has been funded by the LSC for a further year on the understanding that Providers and Connexions work towards mainstreaming the positive practice learned from this programme.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

- The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group note the range of opportunities and interventions available to support young people from falling into NEET for example the **Client Caseload Information System (CCIS)**.
- The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group recommend that as part of the development of a strategic commissioning plan for young people who are NEET, the plethora of projects are evaluated and considered for mainstream funding. It is imperative that the new Durham County Council and its partners invest in what works and see this as core partnership business/mainstream activity.

Employers and Employing Young People

Research undertaken by the Aspire (Aspire is a regional organisation that was set up to look at employment aspirations of the young people of the North East. Investing in Children were commissioned by 'Aspire' in December 2005 to research young people's views of Work Experience in schools regional wide.) in 2005 investigated why employers were not employing young people from the North East. They found that employers desired stronger basic skills in literacy, numeracy, communication and technology and reported that (as of June 2006) less than 50% of students in the North East achieved 5 GCSE passes at Grade A* - C+. Conversely many of the skills shortages being cited by businesses were in fact soft skills that could only be learned through employment and a real working environment, such as team working skills which 51% of North East businesses felt were lacking in young people.

Employer engagement is a key challenge and through the work of the County Durham Economic Partnership (CDEP) and the Local Area Agreement (LAA) this can be progressed. It was also acknowledged that some employers required training on how to deal with young people and through working with the economic partnership look at employers needs.

The North East Construction Employment Integrator (CEI) advised Members that construction employers wished to work with Local Government using Public Sector Procurement. The CEI could help with targeting recruitment and support for training. There was the potential within the planning and procurement procedures to take into account a provision for local apprenticeship within any tender process. Public sector procurement could help to achieve social policy objectives and community benefits by placing obligations on contractors to recruit and train local people. Whilst any submission that included such a provision may not have the lowest outright cost, the savings made by having employers take on local young people and contribute to the reduction of the numbers of young people who are NEET could potentially have greater savings. An example of this possibility is through the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, and also in large regeneration projects. Discussions with Service Direct, the building and construction arm of the County Council, demonstrated that the Council was keen to work to these planned opportunities.

It was noted that the North East Contact Centres 'Go Forward' pathway uses vocational skills development as a vehicle to manage the transition to sustainable employment focussing on skills for life, overcoming barriers and developing work related skills and behaviours in order to find the right people for the right jobs.

Service Direct, together with the Authority's Highways Strategic Alliance Partner Balfour Beatty, provides many opportunities for young people whether in a manual post or in a skills training programme for engineering, purchasing and so on. The acknowledgement of a huge skills deficit in the area highlighted the importance of developing an in-house workforce, which had also increased the rate of retention of trainees. A number of initiatives

were used to help maintain this high retention rate of the workforce, in offering mature apprenticeships, re-deployment and re-training. Service Direct had also encountered difficulties in finding training centres that would train their workforce in highway operations, street lighting and grounds maintenance so this had been developed and provided in-house. It was pointed out that many of the workforce had left school without any qualifications and had now achieved NVQ2 and NVQ3 qualifications. A major barrier in selling employment in the building industry is that young people perceive it as a job rather than a career.

An example of how Employers have approached Colleges to tailor courses to suit their needs was provided by **The Esh Group**. It was explained to Members that The Esh Group had approached Newcastle College to provide an NVQ course over a period of 26 weeks. This shorter period of time for the course was felt to be essential in order to keep the momentum going as often it was difficult to engage young people over a longer period. In the case of The Esh Group, most of their recruits are from County Durham.

The Esh Group had also developed the 'Esh Added Value' scheme which had been able to develop building projects into regeneration projects where young people were employed on apprenticeships. An advantage of this would be to allow the apprentices to remain in one place while completing their apprenticeship and ultimately more likely to stay engaged without the constant moving often associated with construction type apprenticeships.

This has been extremely successful and they now operate their own training company, as they have found this to be a better way of working. The earlier and younger they can start to train young people the better as they can be moulded into a "desirable" employee. It was pointed out thought that a major problem in the construction industry was the considerable amount of poaching of employees across the sector.

Within documents produced by the new **Department for Innovation University** and Skills (DIUS) there is reference to giving incentives to employers to train more young people than may be necessary for their own demand. This kind of "overprovision" had operated in the past whereby larger companies would train many apprentices and smaller firms would then benefit from those who qualified but were not retained by the larger company. It was noted that whilst there were some difficulties in policing this at times, it did create over 2000 jobs.

An area of **concern for employers** was that of the time and resources required to take on apprentices, especially in cases where qualifications such as NVQs were being sought. Many small employers, ironically those most likely to benefit from taking on an apprentice, were often ill equipped to cope with the necessary administration, associated risk assessments, insurance issues and other hidden implications.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group applaud the organisations (see above) that have gone the extra mile to engage and support young people into their organisations and businesses.

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group recommend that the new Durham County Council and its partners learn from the lessons of these organisations and work to reflect in their policy and procedures on recruitment and selection an increase in the number of young people taking up positions in the new Durham County Council and within partner organisations thereby leading by example.

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group recommend that the new Durham County Council and its partners build on work to promote interaction between young people and other sections of society, in particular the business community.

The Employer and Employee Relationship

As already mentioned employers are often not ready for the responsibility of employing young people and conversely many young people are ill prepared for employment and the working environment. Investigations looked at what employers looked for and their preference for recruitment along with young peoples expectations and work ethic.

- **What does an Employer want?**

The County Durham Development Company (CDDC) provides a link between the County Council and the private sector and engages with over 200 companies within County Durham. Although CDDC does not work directly with the NEET group it does raise awareness with potential investors and employers to direct them to partners who do work with this client group.

The CDDC reported that County Durham was losing potential inward investments due to the poor perception of the demographics of some areas of the County. Worryingly investors perceive that the local labour market cannot fulfil its requirements.

Key local employers are also now recruiting directly from Eastern Europe for low skilled jobs due to their motivation to work, low levels of absenteeism and their 'can do' attitude. While other employers are targeting older workers (50+) to fill positions because they are perceived as being motivated to come to work and retention levels are higher.

All of this does not bode well for young people in the region looking for employment. However there is a willingness amongst some employers to recruit 16 year olds so they can grow their own talent from the shop floor to

managerial positions. CDDC confirmed that a potential employee displaying the right attitude, enthusiasm, motivation and work ethic can be as good as one having the right qualifications.

Jobcentre Plus through the Local Employment Partnership (LEP) seeks to encourage employers to look at a broader range of people to employ. Employers are encouraged to take on people who may have been receiving benefit and are out of work for sometime, and as some employers do not take on young people for varying reasons they try and encourage them to do so. Jobcentre Plus work with the LEP on a demand led basis, meet with employers and gather intelligence and negotiate for their customer groups and also work with the LSC through the 'Train to Gain' programme. Many employers look for employees who have the right attitude rather than skills, so Jobcentre Plus advisors work with potential employees on their attitude.

Learning and Skills Council with government backing and in collaboration with organisations such as Business Link and Investors in People have come together across England to promote awareness of the need to train our workforce to a higher level. Train to Gain is the single point of access for businesses to get the training advice and support they need to succeed. The Learning and Skills Council's Train to Gain service provides impartial, independent advice on training to businesses across England. The service gives employers access to a skills broker who will carry out a needs analysis of training within businesses and help them assess what skills the business has now and what they will need in the future.

- **The Employee Expectation**

According to HM Treasury (2004) a significant proportion of young people wish to seek employment at the end of their compulsory schooling at 16, when in fact they are often likely to have poor qualifications and employability skills.

From interviews with the Investing in Children Group it was evident that young people's experiences of work varied greatly with many work placements offered by schools proving unfulfilling or of little real worth to future employment prospects.

For many young people there is a strong belief that there no longer exists a 'job for life'. Furthermore a number of young people have clear career ambitions (in terms of occupation at least), whilst the majority appeared to have a less clear outlook. One consequence of this is that many young people often see their early work experience in instrumental terms (e.g. a 'stop gap' until their ideas develop or simply a way of earning money to pursue other ambitions).

There is also very limited recognition of the specific needs of young recruits, particularly those entering their first job. Most employers adopt a 'one size fits all' induction policy that may, in some cases, be to the detriment of young recruits.

The use of mentors or 'buddies' can also help young people to become attuned more quickly to the social and cultural aspects of the workplace, which many can find difficult. Along with regular feedback can help young people and their expectations of employment in the early days.

The Family Situation

One of the major factors on being or becoming NEET so far not discussed relates to the family situation in relation to support, community and social inclusion.

- **Parental Influence**

Research suggests that young people are more likely to spend time NEET if their parents held low skilled occupations or were not in full-time work. The risk to becoming NEET also increased for young people living in one-parent families or very large families where support was limited.

Anecdotal evidence presented to the joint overview and scrutiny working group suggests that in some instances parents had actively opposed a family member entering EET because this would jeopardise their benefit payments.

Research carried out in Teesside, The Impact of Social Exclusion on Young People moving into Adulthood, revealed that young people from unskilled manual backgrounds were more than five times more likely to be NEET than those from professional backgrounds and one in four young people living on 'difficult to let' estates gained no GCSEs – five time the national average.

Jobcentre Plus provides hardship advisors specifically trained to stabilise and offer support to young people with multiple barriers to EET. Advisors also undertake work with families to try and break the NEET's culture and encourage young people to become engaged through partnership links with the County Council, Connexions and other organisations.

- **Social Inclusion**

The Teesside research also revealed that to be socially included in the community it was necessary to discard any aspirations to study or 'get on'.

The research also noted that all young people at school leaving age wanted to work and getting a job was considered a key to attaining adult status.

- **Poor Neighbourhoods**

Those young people from poor neighbourhoods are likely to suffer from a range of factors which tend to reduce their participation in EET. This can include:

- The effects of second and third generation unemployment in families
- The view that employers avoid people with particular addresses
- The obstacles presented by geographical isolation in disadvantaged rural areas and outer estates with poor public transportation.

Costs of travel, books and equipment as well as day-to-day living expenses are a problem for young people from low-income families with low paid, low

skilled employment or unemployment sometimes preferable to the risks associated with investing financially in education or training, especially if the only option is a full time course.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

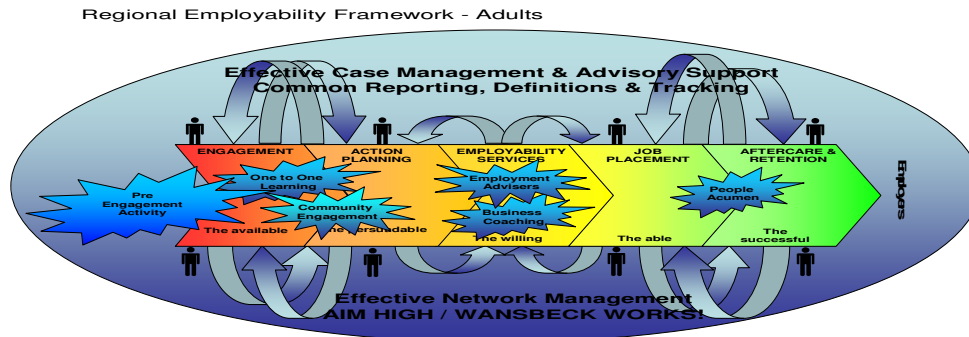
The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group note the importance of family in the NEET relationship.

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group recommend that the new Durham County Council and the County Durham Partnership reflect in their strategic planning actions that will break the cycle of deprivation and improve quality of life for all communities living in poverty.

Secondly welcome the development of a “family support strategy” being developed by the Durham County Council Children and Young People service and the Children`s Trust that will enable families to grow and prosper.

The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector

Acumen is a community enterprise development trust with a main aim to achieve social and economic regeneration through learning enterprise and employment. The regional employability framework for adults runs parallel with the framework for young people and the network which surrounds it comes together so that the services provided are seamless.



Acumen use informal youth work to engage young people including:

- **Youth In Action Project**

The Youth in Action project is aimed at engaging young people in something which will start them on a journey of doing something and would hopefully lead to education, employment or training. The purpose is to get young people involved, engaged and progress this engagement.

- **Key Fund**

Key Fund is a process that young people in the region use. Young people work through the process of developing a project and learn 12 key skills. At the end of the first stage they would submit their plan to a panel and if successful receive funds to undertake the project. There are four stages to this and a young person can progress through all of these. It is seen as a good growing process for young people.

Funding for this comes from various sources including the Northern Rock Foundation, and others from working in partnership. Key Fund works with those disadvantaged, ethnic and disabled groups and involves informal activities and develops them through letting them follow something they would be interested in e.g. rock climbing.

- **Youth Build**

The Youth Build Project is pre-apprenticeship training in construction skills with skills for life and other activities. Centrepont, the Esh Group and Acumen have developed a programme where they have 5 terraced houses to work on.

They take on groups of 12 young people and help them achieve level 2 in literacy, so they then have the skills to apply for an apprenticeship.

- **Employment Advisors**

Employment advisors attend job fairs, provide one to one training, work with the connexions service, and help to get the best job for a young person providing this is what they want.

Apprenticeships, which are primarily relationship based with employers, training providers and young people, often breakdown as something is not right in one of the relationships. Employment advisors have been working to address these gaps, and now match a young person with an employer, and then look for a training provider, whilst working on a young person's attitude to ensure they have the right work ethic.

- **Recruitment Agency**

Acumen operates as a recruitment agency and at present have branches in Seaham and Bishop Auckland, with one to open in Stanley and there is an office in Chester-le-Street. If an employer is not sure whether to employ someone the recruitment agency will employ that person for three months and take the risk away from the employer and in that time provide them with training.

- **Advantages of the Voluntary Sector**

Funding is very much an advantage of the voluntary sector as voluntary sector organisations have the ability to put together funding packages which local authorities are unable to. The voluntary sector also receives funding in advance whereas local authorities primarily are paid on outcomes. This is good for the voluntary sector as they can employ and take on schemes without taking the gamble. Acumen work hard to ensure that schemes have longevity and are sustainable to ensure young people's aspirations of schemes are met.

An imbalance across the county in terms of funding is apparent with some areas accessing greater sums than others. It was expected this would be addressed in the new local authority arrangements.

The voluntary sector is rooted in the community and therefore trusted by young people and is often the first step for them in becoming engaged or doing something and they can be more flexible.

- **Making the Links**

There is a huge amount of creativity going on in Durham throughout the schemes, projects and courses for young people. It is difficult for any single organisation or individual to be fully aware of all developments. Current databases may not be comprehensive or up to date.

Acumen had developed links with a number of organisations and would be happy to assist the authority in making such links if appropriate.

New systems were in place to link an employer with the best employee for the post on offer, with Acumen bridging any gaps in training.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group note the range of interventions and the important role the 3rd sector has with the NEET challenge.

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group recommend that as part of the development of a strategic commissioning plan for young people who are NEET discussions take place with 3rd sector organisations working to alleviate NEET's with a view to:

- A) commissioning delivery as appropriate and
- B) exploring opportunities that exist in the 3rd sector when it comes to accessing funding to support project delivery.

Funding

There are many funding streams targeting support to the 14-19 cohort, including funding for those who are NEET or are at risk of becoming NEET.

What follows is evidence on 'non-mainstream' activity which is funded through the Learning and Skills Council, i.e. it does not relate to the mainstream funding for 14-19 learning activities through FE colleges, School Sixth Forms or Work-Based Learning Providers.

LSC 'non-mainstream' funding includes the LSC 14-19 Reform Budget, Post Inspection Action Plan funding which has been directed through the LSC by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the European Social Fund (ESF).

Often new programmes take time to become recognised and supported by referral agencies and potential students. The start of many projects is very slow with small numbers of referrals, but programmes do become well established and successful. However, funding comes to an end leaving projects unfinished and young people let down.

- **LSC 14-19 Reform Budget**

In 2007/8 the Regional LSC made funding available through the 14-19 Reform Budget to support the Regional Plan to reduce NEET.

Preparation for Progression (P4P) – the programme was funded in 2005-2007 through ESF Co-financing and was aimed at young people who were NEET. The programme engaged young people and worked with them in small groups to deliver a flexible programme of learning, personalised to individual needs, which prepared them to take the next step into training or learning.

In 2007/8 LSC 14-19 reform funding was used to support an extension of this activity. Although there was a delay in contracting arrangements, the programme is now in place. Further support was also made available for an additional 37 places on this programme from Post Inspection Action Plan funding.

In 2008/9, subject to 2007/8 performance, P4P activity will continue to be funded through the LSC 14-19 reform budget.

"Moving on in the Right Direction" - LSC funding was made available in 2007/8 to the County Durham Learning Provider Network to support a 3 strand project 'Moving On' aimed at young people who are NEET. This activity will continue to be funded in 2008/9.

Pregnant Teenagers and Young Parents - LSC funding was also made available to pilot models of provision for 49 young people in County Durham in 2007/08. The delivery of the four programmes will be evaluated and the outcomes will inform how we deliver a programme for a further 48 learners from April 2008 with additional programme funding.

- **Post Inspection Action Plan Funding (PIAP)**

Currently the LSC and the Local Authority are reviewing progress against the priorities in the Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) and identifying priorities for 2008-09.

The DCSF has provided funding in support of our PIAP for the last two years. For 2008/09 we have been advised that there is no direct funding from the DCSF for PIAP, therefore the 14-19 flexible funding paid to the LA from DCSF and a 14-19 flexible fund made available to the LSC will be used to support local 14-19 priorities, including NEET. It is anticipated that support will be at a similar level to that in 2007/8.

- **European Social Fund**

The specification for the “Youth Participation Project” in the new ESF programme was developed regionally by the LSC with input from Local Partnership Teams including County Durham. The specification therefore reflects County Durham priorities. The Tender Specification specifies that “work should be in line with and complement the local Children and Young People’s Plan and 14-19 Strategy” Although the submission made by the Local Authority on behalf of the 14-19 Partnership was unsuccessful, the expectation from the LSC is that the successful Provider will deliver the four strands outlined in the tender specification, in partnership and in line with local priorities.

The four strands are:

- Strand 1 – Progression Provision (this strand includes developing and delivering a pre- mainstream provision)
- Strand 2 – Prevention work
- Strand 3 – Transition support
- Strand 4 – Re-engagement Activity

Implicit in all these strands is that activity will build on current activity as part of the 14-19 strategy and that activity will be locally defined.

The target number of beneficiaries for County Durham is 1900 over the next two years therefore this is a significant number of young people who will benefit from this provision.

- **Future Funding**

In 2008/9, the level of ‘non-mainstream’ funding made available through the LSC to support NEET interventions will increase on 2007/8 levels.

Nationally the LSC 14-19 Reform Budget is allocated to regions on an annual basis from 1st April and there is no guaranteeing that there will be funding beyond that twelve month period.

There is an expectation that non-mainstream funding is deployed to inform ways of working and programme delivery which in turn should inform the use of mainstream funding. It is an essential part of both non-mainstream funding and ESF Co-financing that there is a planned exit strategy which will ensure practice is embedded.

Important Considerations

Funding provision for NEETs is usually short-term due to its reliance on non-mainstream funding which means that provision can come and go fairly quickly. This results in a wealth of initiatives which young people are passed between each with differing targets and accountabilities. This potentially leaves some of the most vulnerable young people in a potential state of flux which does little to help stabilise their situation.

Evidence received by the joint overview and scrutiny working shows that although non mainstream funding made available to support young people into mainstream learning is often short-term, there is an expectation that it is deployed to inform ways of working and programme delivery, which in turn should inform the use of mainstream funding. It is an essential part of both non-mainstream funding and ESF Co-financing that there is a planned exit strategy which will ensure practice is embedded.

The Chamber of Commerce representative advised that if an employer closes or they can't afford to keep a young person on anymore they only have 28 days to be able to help them. They are seen as a leaver/non-achiever and they can't get anymore funding to help them so then they fall into the NEET category. All they can do is encourage them to contact the Connexions Service.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group note the range of funding that is both non mainstream and mainstream available to support young people who are classified NEET.

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group recommend that as part of the development of a strategic commissioning plan for young people who are NEET that funding available is mainstream and ring fenced targeted at the 14-19 year olds.

MAIN MESSAGES

- Young people are NEET for a variety of reasons and many do not stay NEET long term. The NEET group is not static but constantly changing and moving. The family situation and social context of young people has a major bearing on the chances of becoming NEET.
- Whilst there is a stigma attached to being NEETs, and young people should not be discriminated against because of this, there should be every effort made to highlight the benefits to young people, to themselves and the wider community of aspiration, engaging and moving on into work, i.e. promote and sell to young people the benefits of working and having money to spend rather than staying at home and living on very little.
- Employers value positive attitude and a good work ethic. Attitude as highly, if not more so in some cases, than qualifications. Although many are reluctant to invest in local young people and are ill-prepared for them in the work environment. Employers want less bureaucracy/red tape.
- Importance for all agencies and departments to come together to tackle NEET's and so that they are all working towards the same goal. The intention would be that the work of the Group would link into corporate plan, departmental plans and which links back to the budget. There are so many agencies, groups and projects involved with NEETs that there needs to be a coordinated approach to avoid duplication and wasting resources.
- It is important to record to include the good work done by Derwentside Training and also Teesdale Training Centre, as they were concerned that their best practice would be lost under the forthcoming local government re-organisation.
- There is a need to engage young people at early stage as regards future EET, perhaps as early as late primary, or Year 7. Also information should be given re. suitability of options chosen for Year 10 as often students is pushed into options that are not suitable for them, or that create a pathway to allow the young person to move towards their aspirations for EET.
- Continued support for the school into 6th form or college transition, to ensure that during the long summer period, young people do not become disengaged. The Post-16 transition is paramount it is important that young people are armed with the knowledge and information needed for them to move on into EET. The lack of IAG is a root cause of NEETs.
- The Investors in Children Group would undertake appropriate research to feed back into the work of the NEET's Scrutiny Working Group.
- Information on individual young people who are NEET is restricted to those who have written permission to hold or share it; however protocols and procedures need to be agreed so that information on young people can be shared between responsible bodies and agencies with the need to access

such information. (note:- Data on trends, numbers and so on is however, widely shared with partners via Connexions).

- Also not just EET and NEET, there are the “not known’s”, those with no contact with the system. How to monitor, how to engage with these...
- FE colleges support the development of the NEETs Action Plan and anticipate that a number of the initiatives identified could help to overcome some of the problems identified above.
- Funding streams are often short-term and can end suddenly leaving young people with a bad experience and making it even harder to engage with them the next time. Funding needs to be sustainable as much of the work involve intensive support to young people with difficult circumstances.
- There exists a plethora of initiatives which young people might be passed between, each with its own targets and accountabilities – this lack of ‘joined up’ provision has bedevilled the County for some time.
- Evidence also suggests that the different strands of activity to prevent young people from disengaging, to help retain them, and, to re-engage them if they have left EET, have been dovetailed by the LSC and their partners, to form a range of co-ordinated support.
- Projects are intended to address the wide range of needs that this group of young people have and to help young people progress in their learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite continuing reduction in the percentage of young people who are known not to be in education, employment or training, over 1500 young people each month are NEET.

County Durham remains one of the 20 'hotspot' areas nationally.

Significant resources have been deployed to address factors in order to prevent young people becoming NEET at 16, and a wider range of provision is available 16-18 to attract young people into fulltime learning.

A detailed Action Plan has been produced, which is monitored quarterly.

Government have produced a strategy to reduce NEET's and advice to schools on their contribution to reducing NEETs.

Sustained reduction is required to achieve the Nov-Jan 2010 target of 8.8%.

This will be achieved by a range of activities including:

- preventative work with young people pre-16,
- support for transitions to post 16 learning,
- improved retention of young people on programmes for 16-18 year olds,
- greater opportunities provided by employers to enable young people to continue their training in vocational areas.

NEETS in COUNTY DURHAM

Principle:

- No single agency can achieve this on its own.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group recognise the scale of the problem and note that what is needed is a partnership approach with partners taking full responsibility for the strategy and actions.

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group recommend, in line with government thinking on this issue, that the new Durham County Council working through their Children's Trusts, 14-19 partnerships, with employers, the County Durham Economic Partnership and the Learning and Skills Council take a lead role in putting together a strategic commissioning plan for young people who are NEET.

This strategic commissioning plan should identify targeted investment and intensive support based on need and build on the range of projects and activities that exist across County Durham already in support of the NEET challenge.

A key component of the strategic commissioning plan should be to invest in what works informed by an evaluation of the range of projects and activities in

place.

Finally, encourage partners to adopt the concept of the 8 “C”s that will enable a step change in planning ,delivery and impact on communities:

- Commissioned - based on need;
- Coordinated – maximise use of resource and avoid duplication of effort;
- Comprehensive – person centered /holistic;
- Complimentary – builds on what we know works;
- Communicated – information on best practice is shared and acted upon;
- Contracted – is delivered and performance managed accordingly;
- Corporate and Collaborative – is planned as part of the whole system
- Champion – delivers the community leadership responsibility.

Barriers & Opportunities to post-16 education

Principle:

- provision of a full range of courses to meet demand – to engage young people through sufficient provision at every level and in every style of learning
- quality, comprehensive and impartial information, advice and guidance (IAG) to support them to make informed choices about their future.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group note the barriers and the opportunities to post 16 education and welcome the range of interventions available to support young people stay in education.

At the heart of all of this is the need for a strategic commissioning plan to support young people into education, employment and training with total buy in from partners to make this happen.

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group recommend that a review of the quality of Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) offered to 14-19 year olds, that enable them to make choices about their future, is undertaken as a matter of urgency.

Secondly that the new Durham County Council and its partners consider transport costs to sixth forms, colleges and work based learning establishments for all post 16 year olds with a view to alleviating the financial implications of transport to a centre of learning.

Thirdly, that the suggestion from our FE colleges to develop protocols and procedures so that information about young people in learning can be shared between responsible bodies and agencies so that learners don't fall through the net but are tracked and supported into learning be developed.

Opportunities to post-16 education

Principle:

- careful tracking to identify early those young people who are NEET, or who are at risk of becoming NEET;

RECOMMENDATION 3:

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group note the range of opportunities and interventions available to support young people from falling into NEET for example the **Client Caseload Information System (CCIS)**.

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group recommend that as part of the development of a strategic commissioning plan for young people who are NEET, the plethora of projects are evaluated and considered for mainstream funding. It is imperative that the new Durham County Council and its partners invest in what works and see this as core partnership business/mainstream activity.

Employers and Employing Young People

Principle:

- personalised guidance and support – to make sure young people know how to access education, training or employment and to enable them to overcome barriers to participation;

RECOMMENDATION 4:

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group applaud the organisations (see above) that have gone the extra mile to engage and support young people into their organisations and businesses.

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group recommend that the new Durham County Council and its partners learn from the lessons of these organisations and work to reflect in their policy and procedures on recruitment and selection an increase in the number of young people taking up positions in the new Durham County Council and within partner organisations thereby leading by example.

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group recommend that the new Durham County Council and its partners build on work to promote interaction between young people and other sections of society, in particular the business community.

The Family Situation

Principle:

- support for families

RECOMMENDATION 5:

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group note the importance of family in the NEET relationship.

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group recommend that the new Durham County Council and the County Durham Partnership reflect in their strategic planning, actions that will break the cycle of deprivation and improve quality of life for all communities living in poverty.

Secondly, welcome the development of a “family support strategy” being developed by the Durham County Council Children and Young People service and the Children Trust that will enable families to grow and prosper.

The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector

Principle:

- No single agency can achieve this on its own.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group note the range of interventions and the important role the 3rd sector has with the NEET challenge.

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group recommend that as part of the development of a strategic commissioning plan for young people who are NEET discussions take place with 3rd sector organisations working to alleviate NEET's with a view to:

- C) commissioning delivery as appropriate and
- D) exploring opportunities that exist in the 3rd sector when it comes to accessing funding to support project delivery.

Funding

Principle:

- funded programmes that work and that are sustainable.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group note the range of funding that is both non mainstream and mainstream available to support young people who are classified NEET.

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working group recommend that as part of the development of a strategic commissioning plan for young people who are NEET

that funding available is mainstream and ring fenced targeted at the 14-19 year olds.

Systematic Review

RECOMMENDATION 8:

That the new Durham County Council's Overview and Scrutiny arrangements receive an update from the new Executive on progress in relation to all the recommendations in this report in six months time.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ABC2	And Baby Came Too.
BSF	Building Schools for the Future is the biggest ever school buildings investment programme. The aim is to rebuild or renew nearly every secondary school in England over a 10— to 15-year period, beginning in 2005-06.
BTEC	BTECs are vocational qualifications that teach the skills that are needed for working life. There are BTEC courses in a wide range of subjects, including computing, media, hairdressing and retail. There are several types of BTECs, including Firsts, Nationals and Higher Nationals.
BETT	Beyond Expectation Transformation Team
C2L	Care to Learn.
CCIS	Client Caseload Information System.
Connexions	An advice, support and guidance service for 13- to 19-year-olds (13- to 25-year-olds if they have learning difficulties or disabilities) in England. It supports their transition to adulthood and working life by bringing together all the services and support they need in areas such as careers, health, housing and education.
DCSF	The Department for Children, Schools and Families is one of three new government departments set up by the Prime Minister on 28 June 2007; the others being the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (DBERR).
EMA	Education Maintenance Allowance is to help 16-18 year olds carry on learning following compulsory education.
ESF	European Social Funding is one of the four main funds, known as Structural Funds, of the European Union (EU).
FE Colleges	Further education is the type of learning or training that takes place after the age of 16, but before degree level. It can be full or part time, academic or vocational. There are around 450 FE colleges in England and Wales. They fall broadly into

five categories: agriculture and horticulture colleges; art, design and performing arts colleges; general FE and tertiary colleges; sixth form colleges; and specialist designated institutions.

FLT	Foundation Learning Tier.
IAG	Information Advice and Guidance available to all young people in schools relating to careers, decisions on lifestyle choices, further education and training.
IFP	Increased Flexibility Programme.
Key Stage 4	Key Stage 4 is the legal term for the last two years of compulsory schooling in maintained schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, when pupils are aged between 14 and 16.
LAA	Local Area Agreement - how local priorities will be met by delivering local solutions. It also contributes to national priorities set out by the Government.
LIDF	Local Initiative Development Fund
LSC	The Learning and Skills Council exists to make England better skilled and more competitive by improving the skills of England's young people and adults.
LSN	The Learning and Skills Network is an independent not-for-profit organisation. The LSN provides services to policy makers, organisations and individual providers and practitioners across education and training.
NEET	16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training.
NRF	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund is grant monies available to the most deprived local authorities to improve services in collaboration with the Local Strategic Partnership. (Now called the Working Neighbourhoods Fund)
NVQ	National Vocational Qualifications are work-related, competence based qualifications that reflect the skills and knowledge needed to do a job effectively. They represent national standards recognised by employers throughout the

country. They are organised into a classification which is based on the competence levels required.

PIAP Post Inspection Action Plan.

PSA Target The 1998 Comprehensive Spending Review introduced Public Service Agreements. These are part of the Government's improvements to public services. Each PSA is split into targets. Each target contains detailed information including a statement of who is responsible for its delivery, how it will be measured and how its success will be defined.

TIRA Targeted Improvements in Retention and Achievements. (LSC funded programme within FE Colleges)