



Reduction of Early School Leaving of Young People

Work Package 2

Analysis of partner countries policies to ensure that all young learners complete their education

Deliverable 7: Reports on the measures and programmes

U K Country Report

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Introduction to the UK National Education System

Education in the United Kingdom is the responsibility of the constituent countries of the UK, England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, with regional parliaments responsible for funding and decision-making, except for England, where the national UK government is responsible. Therefore, unless stated otherwise, this summary will focus on NEET issues in England.

Population

The population of the UK is 62.5 million, of which 49 million live in England. In terms of ethnicity for England, this breaks down to 87.5 per cent white British, 6% Asian, 3% black /Afro Caribbean and the remainder of various different ethnicities. Responsibility for education in England is shared by the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills(DBIC), with a national budget of £62.6 billion. The total number of those enrolled in education is 11.7 million, of which 3.6 million are secondary and 3.7 million are post-secondary.

Types of Schools/Colleges

Compulsory education in the UK begins at the age of five and continues until the age of 16, although this will be changing in 2013, so that, by 2015, all under 18s will be expected to be involved in education or training. 93% of UK students attend state funded schools, usually run by the local authority, most of which, until recently, were comprehensive, meaning that they take students of all abilities. Some local authorities have selective secondary education, where more academic students are separated out to attend 'grammar' schools. Recently, all of these types of state funded education have begun diversifying into a number of different forms. The government has been pursuing a policy of converting schools into or launching new schools as either City Technology Colleges or City Academies. Both are independent and are funded and operated through the collaboration of private companies, sponsors and the DfE. City Technology Colleges have a particular emphasis on technology and practical skills, whereas City Academies follow a broader curriculum. All of the above, except City Academies, follow the national curriculum, decided by the DfE, and this specifies the subjects that students study and the levels of attainment that they are expected to achieve. A more recent initiative has been the introduction of Free Schools, state funded schools set up and run by members of the local community, though these are still a small minority.

Most of the remaining 7% of who do not attend State-funded schools attend private, fee paying schools, ironically known as public schools. These schools are frequently the subject of controversy due to their disproportionate impact on the country. For example, half all government ministers and one third all Members of Parliament were educated at

public schools, while one third of all Oxford and Cambridge Universities' undergraduate enrolments come from a small group of 100 public schools.

In addition to the above types of schooling, very small minority opt for elective home education.

The Process of Education

Preschool education is patchy across the country, with some local authorities offering a partial service and some offering none. Those who can afford it or who may have to work often pay for private provision. The pattern of state education proper sees students entering primary school at the age of 5 and continuing until the age of 11, where they will be tested at the ages of 7 and 11 for the government's Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 assessments. They would then move to secondary school where, at 14, they are tested for Key Stage 3. Most students then begin on a two year course for the public examination known as the General Certificate of Secondary Education or GCSE, which covers a wide variety of subjects, although the government is currently narrowing the focus to what some would see as a more traditional curriculum. At this stage, some students will do a mixture of GCSEs along with National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ), which are more practical courses.

At the age of 16, students currently have the option to leave education, to stay on at a school if the school has a Sixth Form Centre, or to leave and go to a sixth form or other type of college. Those following an academic course will study 3 to 4 advanced level (A Levels) subjects for two years, which will give them their university entrance qualifications. More recently, some establishments have introduced the International Baccalaureate as an alternative academic route. Those following a more vocational route and can continue in education to study a higher level NVQ or Business & Technician Education Council award (BTEC). These qualifications can also be used as a route to Higher Education, but the scope is more limited. Those who do go on to university in England can expect to pay fees of around £9000 pounds per year and the government has an student loans scheme that enables students to borrow this, along with a living allowance, which are recovered directly from salaries at the rate of 9% on any earnings above £21,000pa. This means that some students could leave university with debts of around £50,000, which can act as a deterrent for poorer families, although the government encourages the view that they should see this as a 9% graduate tax.

The UK School System

Age on 31 August (before school year)	Year	Curriculum Stage	Schools
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3	Nursery	Foundation Stage	Nursery School		
4	Reception		Infant School	Primary School	First School
5	Year 1	Key Stage 1			
6	Year 2				
7	Year 3	Key Stage 2	Junior School		
8	Year 4				
9	Year 5				
10	Year 6		Middle School		
11	Year 7	Key Stage 3		Secondary School	Secondary School with Sixth Form
12	Year 8				
13	Year 9				
14	Year 10	Key Stage 4 / GCSE	College/Sixth Form	Upper School or High School	
15	Year 11				
16	Year 12 (Lower Sixth)	Sixth Form / A-level, International Baccalaureate, Cambridge Pre-U, etc.			
17	Year 13 (Upper Sixth)				

NEET and Early School Leavers

The term NEET was coined to describe young people that they were not in education, employment or training. The transition of young people from the education sector to the labour market has been an on-going problem across the EU, with the pan European figure for all young people between the ages of 15 to 24 showing 10% NEET in 2008 rising to 12.8% in 2010. There are wide variations within the EU for example, Bulgaria, with 21.8% at the top and the Netherlands, with 4.4% having the lowest rate. The current statistics for England, 2nd quarter 2012 (published August 2012), show that 16% of those aged between 16 and 24 fall into the NEET category.

The impact of being NEET has both public and personal consequences, placing long-term financial burdens upon society, estimated to be around £56,000 per person in additional public expense over their lifetime, as well as increasing the probability among those previously classified as NEET for six months or more, of experiencing criminality, ill health, low wages and unemployment by the time they reach 21. The long-term effects can even impact on pension entitlements, as these may be reduced due to periods of unemployment and involvement in low-paid work (Coles et al, 2002).

NEETS themselves are not a homogenous group and can range from the disadvantaged and the ill or disabled to voluntary workers on arts projects or those travelling during gap years.

One recent research (Spielhofer et al, 2009) into the characteristics of 16/17 year-olds identified three groups:

1. 'Open to the learning NEET', who constituted 41% of the NEET Group
2. 'Sustained NEET', who constituted 38% of the NEET Group
3. 'Undecided NEET', who constituted 22% of the NEET Group

The open to learning group were more likely to have an earlier exit from the category whereas the sustained NEETS, who remained longer, were more likely to see themselves as under qualified for either courses or jobs and were more likely to experience lack of opportunities as a barrier. Many in this group said that they would consider education or training but were more likely to choose a work-based route when they did re-engage.

Main reasons and causes for leaving education young

Research has shown that there is no single influencing reason or single identifying risk factor which can be used to accurately predict whether or not a student will drop out of education or leave a course before completion. Usually there are a number of factors, which Murfin (2008) divided into four key areas:

Education factors, which could include

- Poor quality and/or unstimulating teaching
- Poor quality careers guidance
- Lack of subject choices
- Bullying
- Lack of basic skills
- Falling behind with course and losing motivation
- Lack of awareness at the outset of the course about what it would involve
- Feeling isolated

Personal factors, which could include

- Poor attendance and behaviour
- Peer group pressure e.g. gangs
- Personal illness
- Mental health issues
- Personal learning disability or emotional disturbance
- Young age pregnancy
- Substance abuse
- Lack of relevance

Family influences, which could include

- Low educational expectations
- Family disruptions e.g. domestic abuse
- Family bereavement
- Lack of family contact or support

- Lack of family interest in school activities e.g. homework
- Low educational level of parents and siblings
- Carer responsibilities
- Not living with parents or living in care

Community/social factors which could include

- High number of paid working hours outside school
- Poor social behaviour outside school, sometimes leading to prosecutions
- Low socioeconomic status leading to unstable environment
- Cultural reasons e.g. traveller children constantly moving home
- Forced marriage

Current measures

Warning signs are often visible for up to three years prior to students dropping out (Bridgeland et al, 2006) and early intervention to prevent people becoming long-term NEET has been shown to be successful. In Britain, two pilot schemes were trialled; the Activity Agreement Pilots and the Entry to Learning Pilots, both of which ended in 2010/11. Activity Agreement Pilots were set up in 2006 to test ways of helping young people aged 16 and 17 who needed additional support to re-engage in education or training. Different groups were targeted in different phases of the pilot, including those who have been 'long term NEET', those who were Job Seekers Allowance claimants and/or belonged to specific vulnerable groups. These initiatives were followed in 2008 by Entry to Learning Pilots aimed at working with the voluntary and community sector to bridge the gap between re-engagement activities and more formal education and training programmes.

The Activity Agreement was a individually negotiated contract between the young person and their Personal Advisor, which outlined the specific steps the young person should take to progress to education, employment or training and was designed to reflect the young person's individual needs; young people could begin and finish their agreement at any time of the year and it could last from anything for 6 to 20 weeks, with the average length of stay around 12 - 15 weeks. Young people received continuous support from their Advisor throughout the process. Discretionary funding was made available to cover the cost of activities, which were focused on:

- **personal development** – to help cope with personal difficulties and/or boost confidence and motivation. This might include anger management, dealing with money or help to travel independently
- **skill development** – either filling existing skill gaps or more proactively seeking to acquire skills that are necessary to progress to further training or employment - for example, literacy/numeracy

- **work-related activities** – including work tasters, workplace behaviour, CV and interview skills. These activities were particularly popular with participants but could be difficult to source.

The funding content consisted of non-means tested financial incentives of between £10 and £30 per week, which were payable dependent on the beneficiary fulfilling their agreement.

In comparison with a control group of NEETs sharing similar characteristics, the Activity Agreement Pilot groups showed over the short term, a 13% improvement in young people that were engaged in education and employment related activities, three months later. In a survey conducted two years later, sustained long-term benefits of the Pilots were demonstrated. Participants in work-based training or study showed an 8% increase over non-participants; 9% of participants who would have been in work with no training, had been moved onto work-based training, education or work with training; those employed were working at a higher occupational level than those in the comparison sample; 73% of participants had achieved a qualification in comparison to 62% in the control sample.

The evaluation study concluded that although the intensive support and tailored learning of the Activity Agreement Pilot was resource heavy, the support provided to young people that were previously difficult to engage, proved beneficial.

The Entry to Learning Pilots were designed to provide young people who were NEET with opportunities to improve their skills and employability through strengthening the progression between voluntary and community sector re-engagement activity and formal learning (Bickerstaffe and Walton, 2010). In common with the previous initiative, this programme also involved a financial incentive to retain them on the programme and a personal advisor. In this instance the advisor supported them throughout their time on the programme (an average of 15 weeks) and brokered access to bridging activities that would help them progress to further learning, which were accredited wherever possible. These included:

- Mentoring and support from the Advisor
- Personal development designed to increase confidence and motivation (e.g. group activities, first aid course, driving theory, activities to improve literacy and numeracy)
- Work-related learning (eg CV writing, vocational taster courses and preparing for going on a course)

The main difference between the two pilots was that within Entry to Learning, provision was sometimes contracted out to voluntary organisations. Consequently, provision was variable in quality with some pilots building on existing engagement work with young people, while others selected one voluntary sector organisation to act as a 'portal' through which the local authority worked with to identify and access other voluntary sector providers.

Although Entry to Learning had less rigorous eligibility criteria, far fewer participants than Activity Agreement Pilots and was not subject to external quantitative evaluation, indications of participant destinations showed positive results. 61% had left the pilots and progressed to a positive destination, half of them into education and two fifths to training

(largely Entry to Employment or an Apprenticeship) and 41% were still participating in the programme, with the remainder entering employment with training. In addition, 72% were still recorded in a positive destination 13 weeks after they had left the programme.

Recent Examples of Good Practice

Example 1

A study published in 2008 called Education Subsidies and School Dropout Rates analysed the effect of a means tested payment launched in September 1999, the Educational Maintenance Allowance, which was given to students from disadvantaged backgrounds in order to help them continue into post 16 education. The scheme's details were as follows:

A variable payment of a means tested, weekly attendance allowance of a

1. maximum of between £30 and £40. This was available only to students whose parents' incomes were between £13,000 and £30,000 and was tapered from the maximum amount, payable only to those families earning the lower amount, down to £5 per week for those on the upper amount.
2. Payment was made direct to either the student (three variants) or their parent (one variant).
3. A termly retention bonus was paid contingent on good attendance, of between £50 and £80.
4. An achievement bonus of either £50 or £140 was paid at the end of the course, if goals set out in the initial Learning Agreement were fulfilled.

Interviews were used to collect data from both the parents and students involved in the pilot studies. No significant differences were detected between the variants where the student received the payment, but participation rates were lower in the single variant in which payment was made direct to the parent.

Analysis of participation and retention data indicated that by using a system of conditional payments, drop-out rates were significantly reduced. First year increases of 4.8 percentage points for boys and 4.2 percentage points were recorded, whilst 2nd year results increased to 7.6 percentage points for boys and 5.3 percentage points for girls. In addition, these results had the greatest impact on children coming from families in the poorest socio-economic backgrounds, as well as those with poor prior educational achievement. The scheme was closed to new applicants in September 2011.

Example 2

A programme called Building Engagement, Building Futures: Our Strategy to Maximise the Participation of 16-24 Year Olds in Education, Training and Work, aims at early intervention by adding an additional £ 600 for every pupil on free school meals to provide additional support to raise attainment. The total budget for this will rise to £2.5b in 2014-2015. It outlines the specific tools being used to reach the group as follows:

1. A radical reform of the school system, including raising the participation age to 17 by 2013 and 18 in 2015, improving attainment and use of early intervention to prevent disengagement by increasing the freedom and flexibility of schools, improving the curriculum, addressing poor behaviour and targeting support on disadvantaged pupils.

2. Providing parents, pupils and schools with data showing pupils' destinations post school by developing a new Destination Measure at Key Stage 4, itemising proportions of those going on to 6th form, college, apprenticeships and work, to be in place by Spring 2012.
3. Introducing a new duty making schools responsible for careers guidance from September 2012 for pupils in years 9-11. To support schools in fulfilling their new duty, statutory guidance will be published, setting a clear expectation that they should secure face-to-face careers guidance where it is the most suitable support, in particular for disadvantaged children and those who have special educational needs. The education regulator Ofsted will take into account the extent that schools work in partnership with businesses.
4. Address financial barriers to participation through better targeted support, including the creation of a new £180 million 16-19 Bursaries Fund.
5. Reform vocational education through introducing coherent 16-19 programmes of study as a consequence of giving providers freedom to design courses appealing to young people that may otherwise be disengaged.
6. Simplifying processes to make more apprenticeships available and offering at least 40,000 incentives for small businesses to operate apprenticeship schemes.

Example 3

A scheme, launched in July 2012 as part of the Deputy Prime Minister's Youth Contract, proposes to fund organisations across England up to £126m to get 16 and 17 year olds back into education or training. The organisations will be paid by results.

Organisations will receive an initial payment for taking young people on, but will only receive subsequent payments when they show progress, such as getting young people to engage with training programmes or undertake apprenticeships. The contracts on offer are worth up to £2,200 for every young person helped, with the full amount payable only if the young person is still in fulltime education, training or work with training six months after re-engaging. Charities and businesses with an expertise in supporting young people will bid to participate in the programme. The Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, said at its launch that

'...we're unlocking funding for these organisations to be as creative and innovative as they can, to do whatever it takes, to get the young people who need it most back on their feet. In exchange for this freedom, all we ask is that they get results. It's a win-win for the government, young people and the organisations involved.'

Conclusion

There is clearly a growing awareness that too many young people drop out of school or training for reasons which could have been prevented. As a result, there seems to be a growing recognition of the need to tackle disengagement as early as possible and to introduce targeted interventions in particular.

Nevertheless, there also seems to be a tendency towards 'tougher' policy measures, emphasising the responsibilities of young people themselves, and of their parents and schools. Reintegration approaches such as those discussed, tend to offer flexible rather than rigid pathways back to education or employment and are usually tailored to the needs of the participants, with support from a range of specialists. Alternative methods of delivery

are often used for the provision of 'second-chance' learning, based on consultation and collaboration with stakeholders from outside the public sector.

Three key features in common with both types of initiative discussed here are evident. Intensive one to one support from an advisor helped the participants get the most from their programmes; activities were tailored to meet individual needs and provide a platform from which they could progress and the financial allowance provided an incentive to help engage and retain young people. Across both pilots, the evidence suggests that the allowance brought more people into the programmes and kept them there, than would have been the case if there had been no financial incentive (Bickerstaffe and Walton, 2010 and Maguire *et al*, 2009). This may at first seem to be relatively costly, but provides a good return when compared to the long-term impacts, both economic and social, of failing to address the NEET problem and needs to be tackled at a national level.

For these schemes to be successful, efficient communication between stakeholders, providing good quality local authority data and tracking systems to identify vulnerable individuals and a flexible provision structure to remove barriers to participation, are essential. Early identification and implementation of support structures are crucial to the success of any scheme to prevent disengagement from education and training. Lack of suitable provision to give opportunities for job shadowing and work experience was identified as a drawback and requires careful co-ordination to engage participants in work related training.

Statistical Data

DATA SET	VALUE	YEAR	SOURCE	COMMENTS
SIZE OF POPULATION UK SIZE OF POPULATION ENGLAND (IN MILLIONS)	62.3 49	2011	Office for National Statistics 2011 Census	
GROSS-DOMESTIC- PRODUCT (GDP) (IN \$)	2.43 trillion		World Bank	
GROSS-DOMESTIC- PRODUCT (GDP) (PER CAPITA – IN \$)	38,818		World Bank 2011	
TOTAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (IN %)	11,6	2011	Office for National Statistics 2011	
YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (16-24)	1.04	2011	-II-	
EDUCATION SPENDING	62.6b	2011	-II-	
EDUCATION, TOTAL ENROLEMENT	11.7m	2011		
ENROLMET, SECONDARY LEVEL	3.6m	2011	-II-	
TERTIARY ENROLMET	3.7m	2011	-II-	
INDEPENDENT SECTOR EDUCATION (%)	7%	2011	-II-	
PROGRESSION TO SECONDARY SCHOOL (%)				
REPETITION RATE, SECONDARY LEVEL (%)				
UNEMPLOYMENT WITH PRIMARY EDUCATION (% OF TOTAL UNEMPLOYMENT)				
UNEMPLOYMENT WITH SECONDARY EDUCATION (% OF TOTAL UNEMPLOYMENT)				

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