



Education to Employment: Supporting Youth Participation

Summary Note
March 2021

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SUMMARY

1. This project aimed to support a set of 11 local authorities (LA), and groups of LAs, through an action learning approach to: better understand the barriers and challenges for councils in fulfilling their statutory duties for young people; and, identify solutions to delivering effective support for young people at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) or who are NEET.
 2. Between December 2020 and February 2021 the LAs undertook:
 - 2.1 A review of the issues they faced.
 - 2.2 Met with York Consulting staff to develop an action plan to address the issues identified.
 - 2.3 Engaged in a series of two interactive online workshops to share experiences and ask each other questions about identifying and implementing solutions.
 - 2.4 Provided case studies of areas they had addressed.
 3. The constrained timescales for the project (linked to Covid) meant that most authorities were only just starting to implement their action plans in March 2021. Therefore results of their activities will only become clear in the next six to 12 months.
 4. The main areas addressed by the LAs included the following, illustrated in the report through quotes and case studies:
 - 4.1 **Tackling disengagement from education, employment and training.** Examples: effective coaching models, virtual communication to replace face-to-face contact and use of 'trauma-informed' approaches.
 - 4.2 **Availability of education and training.** Examples: improved assessment to support young peoples' personal development, lack of provision and links to Kickstart.
 - 4.3 **Access to opportunities.** Examples: Youth Hubs, use of social media, IT recycling schemes.
 - 4.4 **Impact of COVID-19.** Examples: potential for volunteering opportunities, NEET initiatives/partnerships to support young people and duty careers adviser roles.
 - 4.5 **Targeting NEET sub-groups.** Examples: focused on care leavers and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), employer marketing approaches, encouraging business mentors.
 - 4.6 **Early identification/risk of NEET.** Examples: data sharing/monitoring and implementation of a Transition Support Worker role.
 - 4.7 **Strategic perspective.** Examples: being open to change in policy and delivery, developing a shared vision, effective relationships with Youth Services.
 5. A set of cross-cutting issues were interwoven throughout these main areas described above: communication with young people; availability of opportunities; monitoring COVID-19 effects; impact of mental health effects; LA networking and partnerships; improved data collection; understanding specific issues and barriers affecting young people.
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Conclusions

6. As a result of undertaking this work we identified a range of conclusions, including:
 - 6.1 Many authorities are facing some similar challenges particularly around high levels of disengagement, reduced funds and staff, young people who face complex barriers such as poor mental health and who rapidly become de-motivated or withdraw from education employment and training (EET). Other areas of challenge relate to the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns, and the identification of 'unknown' and at-risk young people.
 - 6.2 Smaller numbers of authorities are facing challenges linked to collaborating with schools, developing a strategic approach, and a reluctance among young people to travel for EET opportunities. One authority was seriously considering the relationship between youth support services and careers support in the longer term, for those who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET.
 - 6.3 A particular consideration in some authorities is the effectiveness of support for those in vulnerable sub-groups. In response to the mismatch between the mainstream EET offer and the specific needs of key NEET subgroups (care leavers, those with mental health problems and those with a SEND) there is a requirement for greater flexibility and a bespoke offer that will be vital in allowing these groups to progress. While it is acknowledged that this approach is more resource intensive, we contend that any investment would be worthwhile in terms of the long-term economic benefits for these groups, as a result of them accessing and taking up meaningful employment and experiencing a better quality of life.
 - 6.4 A proportion of NEET young people have been unable to or have chosen not to engage with online communication and provision of EET. This has significant implications, with the risk of a substantial 'left behind' group emerging in the near future. Furthermore, 'digital poverty' is a key concern that has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Action to address the skills and equipment gaps will be vital in successfully bringing this NEET group into positive EET opportunities.
 - 6.5 The data gap for older NEET young people has been highlighted. This is of particular relevance for the 18+ group who may have been unemployed for longer periods and for whom it is difficult to track and monitor. This then impacts on the scope for positive engagement due to a lack of connection with young people.
 - 6.6 The benefits of intervening earlier have been highlighted. Closer working with schools and colleges will be central to addressing this alongside a need for improved data capture systems for identifying young people at risk, as early as possible.
 - 6.7 There is a clear desire among authorities to learn from each other and to share experiences of supporting youth participation through increased networking opportunities. Looking forwards it will be interesting to see how LAs progress in addressing their issues and the longer-term results of implementing their action plans.
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