



A report of a policy roundtable exploring the role of the sector in supporting young people's access to education, employment and training opportunities

The Speaking Out Project

Speaking Out is a joint project between the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) and Children England that sets out to build a voice for the children and young people's voluntary and community sector across Government as part of a strategic partnership with the Office of the Third Sector within the Cabinet Office, with extended funding until 2011.

The project aims to develop closer links between a range of Government departments and the voluntary and community sector in delivering cross departmental plans that impact on children and young people.

Introduction

This report is the outcome of a joint event held by the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) and the Local Government Association (LGA) on March 18, 2010 to explore the involvement of voluntary and community sector agencies in the LGA's *Hidden Talents* programme.

Hidden Talents is the personal programme of Dame Margaret Eaton, the Chairman of the LGA, to challenge local authorities and their partners to come up with new and long lasting policy solutions to engage all young people in learning, earning, caring or volunteering.

The event invited senior representatives of some of the largest voluntary sector providers of learning opportunities to offer their insights into the sector's role. The NCVYS network includes a wide range of providers of services to children and young people, and at the event were experts from the field, including those with knowledge of volunteering, developing skills, working in deprived communities, re-engaging young people in learning and children with learning disabilities.

This report highlights the key points from the event.

The event

The event was chaired by Susanne Rauprich, Chief Executive of NYCVS.

Dame Margaret Eaton welcomed participants to the event and outlined the *Hidden Talents* work to date and the key challenges.

The *Hidden Talents* campaign has covered three areas of work:

- an in depth examination of the problems in the current policy framework and the barriers currently experienced by young people;
- Informed by this analysis a proposals on how to make the system work better to meet the needs of young people;
- best practices examples of work with young people, the case studies demonstrate what can be achieved when we all work together.

Dame Margaret stressed the importance of working with the voluntary sector. She highlighted that local authorities are pleased to be taking on new funding responsibilities for 16 – 19 and have the ability to take an even more joined up approach to the delivery of all children and young people's services from 0 -19 and was very clear that local authorities cannot do everything on their own.

She outlined the major challenges ahead:

- to ensure that the commissioning processes are right so that they meet local needs and are accessible to those who are closest to re-engaging local young people, no matter what size of organisation;
- to make sure that we are working closely with the private sector;
- celebrating the importance of young people being involved in all sort of informal learning and volunteering activities;
- supporting volunteering in organisations that work with young people.

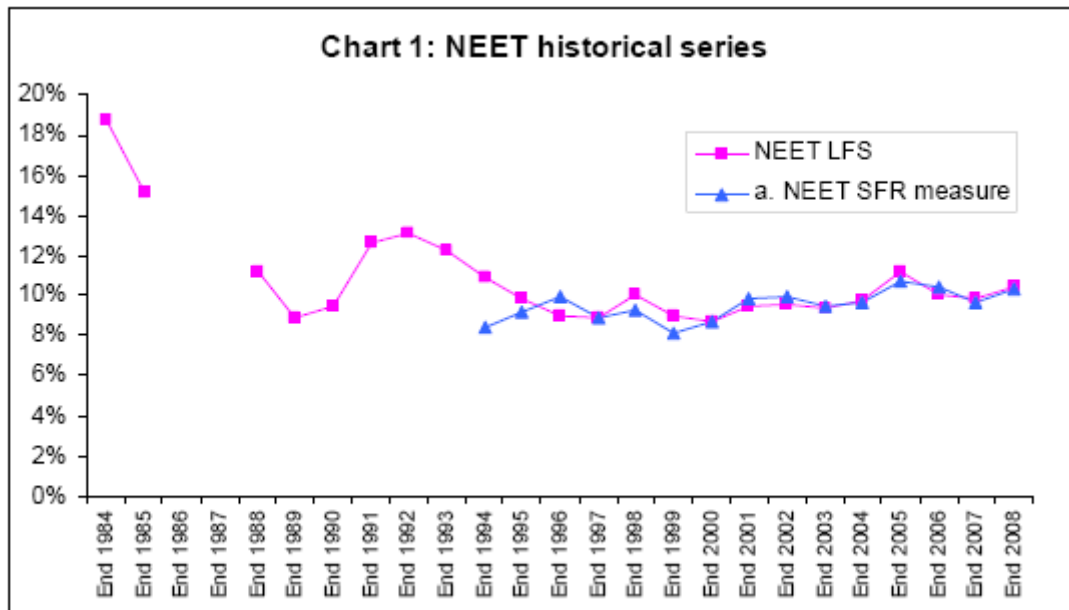
Evidence overview and policy context

Philip Mind, Senior Policy Consultant at the LGA outlined the evidence base gathered for the Hidden Talent's programme. To summarise:

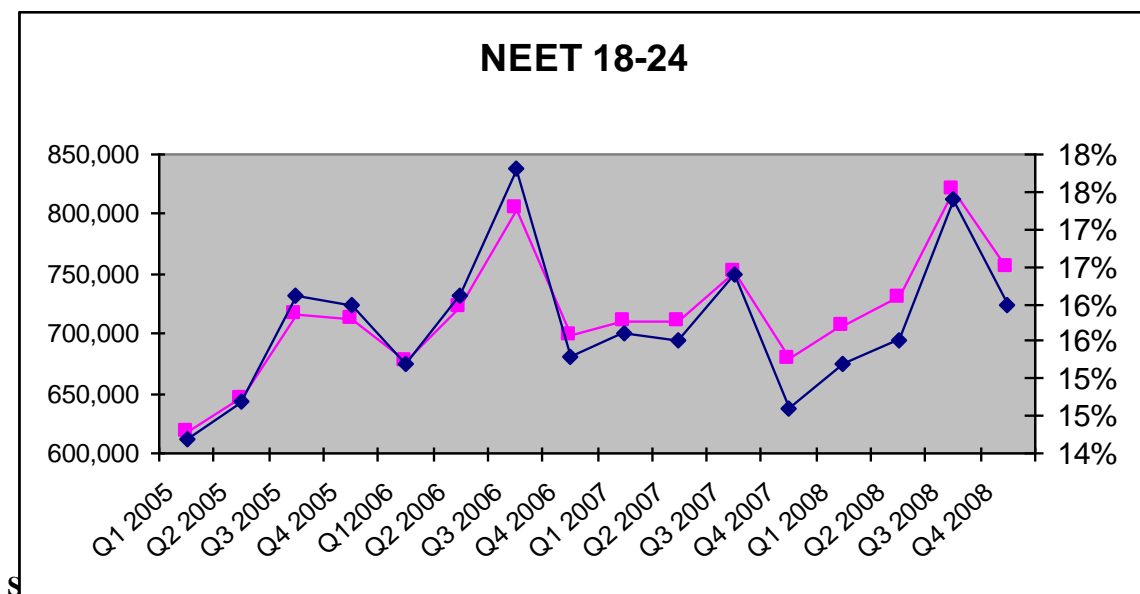
- existing policies aren't working and are socially and fiscally unaffordable;
- pre-recession high levels of disengagement;
- specific areas with high levels of disengaged young people;
- impact of the recession;
- public spending costs – £7 billion a year and accrued costs per young person are £97,000 each¹.

¹ For more information see www.lga.gov.uk/hiddentalents

Structural disengagement 16-18

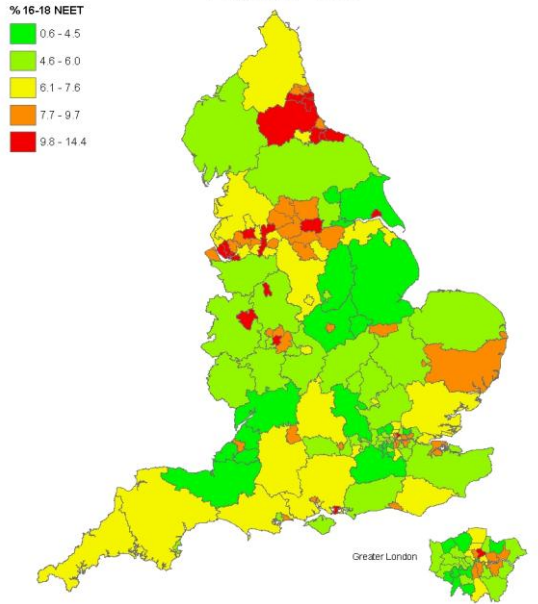


Structural disengagement 18-24

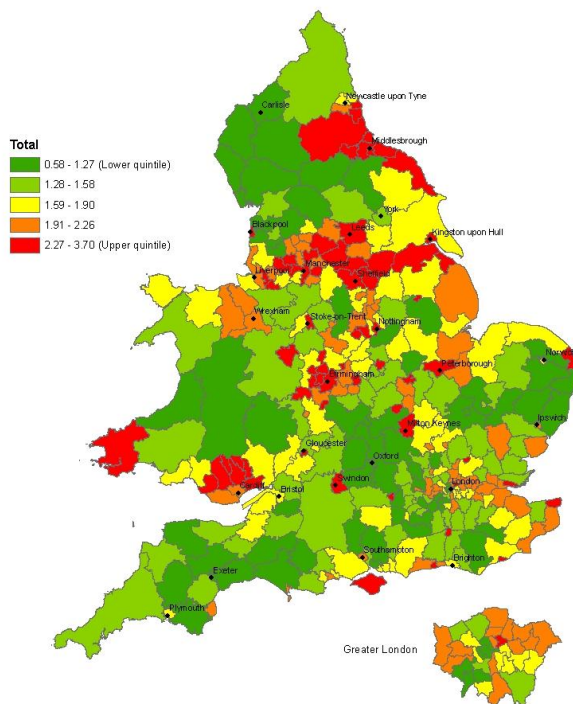


The following two maps highlight the spatial variation:

Proportion of 16-18 year olds NEET
(not in education, training or employment)
England, 2008

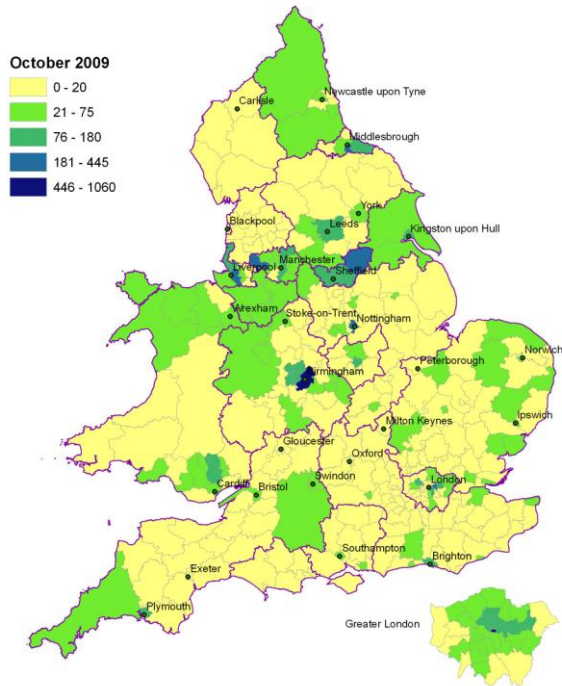


Source: DCSF, Participation in Education, Training and Employment, 16-19 year olds, in England, June 2008. Reproduced with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of HMSO. © Crown Copyright and database right 2008. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100030882



Source: claimant count with rates and proportions, Nomis January 2010. Reproduced with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of HMSO. © Crown Copyright and database right 2008. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100030882

Claimant count: Individuals
aged under 24 claiming for over 12 months
England Wales, October 2009



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Source: Nomis, October 2009

Annual Public Spending Costs (excluding FE, Sixth Form and HE costs)

Benefits – JSA, IS and IB	£2 billion
Child Benefit 16+	£1.22 billion
Education Maintenance Allowance	£549 million
Connexions	£500 million
Training programmes – apprenticeships, Future Jobs Fund	£3 billion

Hidden Talents draws attention to the fact that the policy response has taken insufficient account of local factors, these can be summarised as:

- institutional barriers – multiple agencies, funding streams, transitions;
- cultural barriers – local propensity to engage;
- real economic geography - labour markets are sub-regional;
- wider social policy – child protection/engaging young people.

This leaves much opportunity for working with the voluntary sector and to recognise that what works best cannot be centrally prescribed. LGA calls for a system based on place based budgets. This needs to focus on what young people can do, including volunteering and informal learning. It is also critical that engagement is first the responsibility of young people, their families and the whole community, with a specific focus on engaging the whole family. The *Hidden Talents* research highlights that engaging more young people in meaningful activity is a local process and should be a worked through with young people to develop relevant and flexible programmes.

Key to the approach proposed by the LGA and the Centre for Social Justice is the concept of acting early to prevent a young person from becoming disengaged. This involves challenging the way in which we deliver our services to make sure that we have meaningful and relevant ways in which young people can learn.

Alison Miller, Senior Policy Consultant from the ReACT team highlighted the challenges and opportunities of the 16-19 funding transfer:

Challenges:

- the complexity of the machinery of government changes and the current system;
- the transition at 19 and ensuring that vulnerable young people do not fall between the age boundaries inherent in the system;
- Meeting needs below level 2, in particular ensuring that foundation learning effectively meets the needs of all young people;
- Growing the number of apprenticeships in the current economic climate.

Opportunities:

- the ability to ensure a new coherence in provision for young people 0-19;
- being able to achieve a better fit with the local labour market and regeneration;
- raising the participation age;
- the ability for more provision outside the mainstream.

Panel discussion

A voluntary sector panel expert panel each presented their key challenges for the meeting to consider.

Ginny Lunn, Director of Policy and Development, Princes Trust

Ginny posed the key challenge of ensuring that we meet the needs of all young people up to the age of 25 and the challenge of the complex funding streams when working across the age boundaries. Additional challenges include:

- finding solutions to engage young people in work in the current economic climate;
- recognising the increasing challenge of this at all levels, including unemployed graduates;
- the complexity of multiple initiatives that often conflict with an ensuing major challenge for young people to find their way through it;
- working with employers and finding the quality employers who understand the needs of young people.

Alan Strickland, Senior Policy Officer, Volunteering England

Alan's key challenge is what can volunteering organisations do to make the benefits of volunteering truly accessible to NEETS?

He highlighted:

- people need to allocate resources to NEETs initiatives and as volunteering is not currently included in the definition of NEET the time and resources are not applied to young people's volunteering;
- volunteering is not a magic bullet – it is inaccessible to a number of young people, for example, 40% of young people with a degree volunteer once a month but the figure drops to 15% for young people with no qualifications;
- there are conflicts within the system, whilst volunteering may be seen as a positive activity by some it is often actively discouraged by Job Centre Plus.

He argued that the power of volunteering is:

- a bridge for those young people furthest away from the labour market;
- A contribution to local social networks;
- an effective social return on investment

Richard Williams, Chief Executive, Rathbone

Richard's key challenge is not about engaging young people who are NEET, but about a much broader engagement around supporting young people into the transition into work and that we need to reconsider different routes into work other than through the formal institution route.

He highlighted:

- there is little evidence that the accumulation of some qualifications lead to employment;
- it is key to broker the relationships with employers to support the transitions into work;
- there are no cash incentives in the system for employers to engage positively with young people;
- there is no proactive policy stance on building the links with work;
- there is a need to re-invent a modern version of the youth training scheme that properly directed towards employment.

Heidi Watson, Regional Director, Groundwork East Midlands

Heidi's key challenge is to ensure that the hardest to work with young people do not

get left behind. She highlighted:

- the need for specific support for young people where academic achievement can be difficult;
- in times when young people cannot get jobs the need for new methods of measuring achievement, including programmes that reflect softer and more generic outcomes;
- the need for future flexible programmes.

John Bateman, Chief Executive, UK Youth

John highlighted the challenge of ensuring the voice of the third sector is heard, in particular:

- the need to ensure the voice of the third sector is wired into the local authority planning processes;
- the need to challenge the definitions of informal and non-formal learning and the need to be clear about using non-formal learning when talking about flexible provision;
- a request for a direct amount of funding from the YPLA into the third sector;
- a proposition that some unclaimed assets into a social investment for young people.

Key points from the discussions and panel summary

The following key points were highlighted. In particular, the need to

- get better at providing volunteering opportunities;
- think about the full range of internships and other opportunities with councils coordinating;
- get smarter at commissioning and providing opportunities for all types of third sector organisations;
- incentivise and engage the private sector to invest in creating sustainable jobs and opportunities for young people;
- support effective transitions into work for non traditional learners;
- providing the right support for young people to volunteer, including addressing the structural barriers that stop young people volunteering;
- engage the support of the private sector to build working with young people into the contracting and supporting local communities;
- the need to change the media image of young people and celebrate positive role models, including highlighting the role of Youth of Today²;
- develop locally appropriate schemes;
- open up more opportunities;
- support and value peer to peer work;
- hold a significant debate as to how we open up the labour market, in particular for the those entering with low or no qualifications;
- to incentivise employers in order to equalise the context of multiple disadvantage.

² For more information see <http://www.theyouthoftoday.org/>

Next steps

The Local Government Association is currently developing the next stages of its *Hidden Talents* programme looking at volunteering and greater involvement of business. This will build on the discussions from this roundtable event. Both NCVYS and LGA are committed to continue to working together to ensure excellent partnerships between statutory and non-statutory providers of services to young people at risk of facing poor education, employment and training opportunities.

If you would like any details regarding this paper, contact details for further information are provided below.

NCVYS contact

Faiza Chaudary

T: 020 7278 1041

E: faiza@ncvys.org.uk

LGA contact

Bethia McNeill

T: 0207 664 3296

E: bethia.mcneil@lga.gov.uk