

**Assessing the potential of e-learning to support re-  
engagement amongst young people with Not in education,  
employment or training (NEET) status**

**An independent research and evaluation study  
Overview report  
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**by**

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background

This overview report is focused on results arising from the Becta commissioned research study to assess the potential of e-learning to support re-engagement amongst young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). This overview report outlines key findings and makes recommendations, based on evidence presented in, and analyses contained within, the wider background report.

### 1.2 The aims and purpose of the research study

Becta identified a number of specific aims for the study at the outset:

- to explore the reasons why young people who are NEET have left education, and whether or not they have any intention of going back to education at any point in the near future (distinguishing between short-term and long-term NEET)
- to gauge their attitudes towards technology generally, to include computers, and also mobile telephones, games consoles, music technology, and video
- to know how young people use technology now and how they plan to use technology in the future
- to evaluate the potential for technology to re-engage young people.

A number of objectives were similarly identified for the study. There was a need to:

- better understand the potential of technology to re-motivate young people after they have disengaged from education
- consider whether technology has a part to play, based on interview evidence
- consider what the implications are for the technology itself, whether there is a need to look at new technology or existing technology, or existing technology used in different ways
- consider what the implications are for Becta in working with partners, especially the LSC (Learning and Skills Council) and Connexions
- develop advice for policy makers and agencies involved in NEET reduction and prevention on engagement in education and training
- understand any real potential for Becta in terms of policy to begin addressing the issue in a practical and focused way
- consider what sort of policy approach might be concerned

- consider what sort of approach could be developed, or whether there is a need to look at a number of different approaches in different localities, addressing different categories of young people who are NEET.

### **1.3 The evidence base for this study**

The evidence base for this study consisted of 53 young people interviews, 305 questionnaire returns, 50 key informant interviews, 21 training provider interviews, and a range of case study data (see Appendix 1 for further details).

## 2 Executive summary

The study has highlighted a range of systemic aspects concerned with supporting young people who are NEET and suggests a number of improvements in systems and practices. The research has also identified some gaps in the data for this group and highlights the need for more information in order to ascertain the size and nature of the 'NEET problem'.

If Becta recognises work in the area of NEETs as being of strategic importance, then the following issues will need to be considered.

The main support for young people who are NEET is currently provided by Connexions services who offer a range of information and support. The findings of the research indicate that the population of young people who are NEET is far from homogenous and includes a wide range of young people including those with serious problems, those who lack skills, those who have poor relationships and attitudes, as well as gap year students and those who are simply temporarily between courses or jobs.

Current government policy is introducing major changes to education for the 14-19 age group, and this provides an ideal opportunity for Becta's involvement and influence to be developed in this area, since key people involved in this sector are working in a system that is in a state of flux, where practices are being questioned and established.

The findings of this study indicate that there is a clear case that ICT has a place in supporting young people 16- to 18-years-old who are NEET. However, the development of the implementation of appropriate support practices will not be simple. It is made more difficult because of the wide variety of differences that exist across the population of young people who are NEET. No single 'one size fits all' solution will be effective. Rather, a set of solutions that focus on different groups of young people, within a system that offers sufficient social intervention to engage young people who are NEET, will need to be identified.

ICT is currently being used in different ways and to different extents across the sector and the research identifies a range of actions that can be taken by Becta, both strategic and operational. There are some groups of young people who are NEET whom Becta would benefit from prioritising and the research suggests various ways in which Becta could work with these groups. There are also some useful ways in which Becta could work with providers, and in addition, there is a key need for Becta to work with the DCSF (Department for Children, Schools and Families). Finally, the study suggests ways forward for future research.

## 3 Key messages

### 3.1 Background and context

Data from National Statistics (2007a) show that the unemployment rate within the 16- to 17-year age range category has increased over the past few years, and that it has increased more dramatically in the last four years (an increase of at least 5 per cent over that time period, reaching a level of some 27 per cent in January 2007). The unemployment rate for 16- to 17-year-old males has increased by some 10 per cent over the past six years, to a level of some 30 per cent in January 2007, while the unemployment rate for women of the same age range was about 23 per cent in January 2007. The same pattern is not shown for the 16- to 24-year age range group, however. The percentage unemployment rate decreased (between 1992 and 2001) and then rose to a level of about 15 per cent by January 2007. The pattern for the 18- to 24-year-old age range is similar. By inference, this suggests that the unemployment rate in the 16- to 18-year-old sector is relatively high, but that lower levels of young people who are NEET persist as they become older. Indeed, recent figures indicate that about 145,000 young people in the 16- to 17-year-old age group have been unemployed for a period of up to six months (National Statistics, 2007b), but far fewer have been unemployed for a period over 12 months (currently around 15,000 young people). Connexions services work on targets that do not readily relate to these data (a Connexions service in one region met its November 2007 target of five per cent for young people who are NEET, for example).

- It should be noted that national statistics showing the numbers of unemployed young people in the 16- to 19-year-old age range use definitions which currently cover a very wide spread, and the unemployed includes those who are gap year students and those who are waiting to take up places on degree or vocational courses. This makes it difficult to assess how many of these young people are NEET in the sense of presenting a problem or needing help, as opposed to those who are merely between periods of productive employment and education.
- Young people who are 16- to 18-years of age and who are NEET are involved in and supported by a system that already integrates some uses of information and communication technologies (ICT) mainly through Connexions services.
- It is clear from this exploratory study that the system of support is not uniform across England, that it is in a state of flux, and that there are inherent weaknesses in the system.
- The research also shows that the role of ICT could have a marked impact in supporting young people more effectively, but that some aspects of the fluidity currently inherent in the system in certain respects do not support those who have a chaotic, unordered or potentially destructive lifestyle.
- The study has highlighted a range of systemic aspects concerned with supporting young people who are NEET that could be improved. These

improvements would parallel the current development of systems to implement the 14-19 agenda (as laid out in The White Paper, 2005), and should seek to provide a wide range of opportunities for the integration of ICT at a number of levels (some in general, and others in specific, ways).

- The 14-19 agenda (The White Paper, 2005), stressed: "The transformation of secondary and post-secondary education, so that all 16 year-olds achieve highly and carry on into sixth form, college, an Apprenticeship or work with training until at least the age of 18, is a critical priority for Britain ... But the challenge ahead remains immense. Participation among 16- to 19-year-olds remains very low by international standards. We are close to the bottom of the OECD league table for participation among 17-year-olds. That is now the burning problem facing our education system. The system for 14-19 education – curriculum, assessment and the range of opportunities on offer – needs radical modernisation to meet contemporary and future demands. ...In some parts of the country, designated as 14-19 pathfinder areas, the process has gone even further. Schools and colleges have worked with local authorities and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to offer young people a range of options which goes beyond what any one institution can provide and which is succeeding in attracting many more young people to learning".
- The planned implementation of the 14-19 agenda will be through 14-19 consortia in local authorities and will involve a number of major agencies.
- The 14-19 consortia in each local authority are vitally important to the NEET agenda, since the ways in which ICT might support young people who are NEET needs to be considered by each consortium when developing ideas of effective delivery through an action plan. At that point, the effective uses of ICT will need to be integrated at a local policy level as part of the local authority's overall strategy. The support for young people who are NEET (rather than covering everyone across the age group) needs to be a specific part of that strategy and plan, and all 14-19 consortia will need to develop appropriate actions to support preventative as well as responsive approaches.
- Current government policy provides for schools to be the key agencies for preventative measures for those who are at risk of becoming NEET, while Connexions services are the key agencies for responsive approaches.
- Key people involved in the Connexions services are personal advisers. Personal advisers often spend large amounts of time in schools supporting young people with advice and guidance on training and employment, as well as considerable time in supporting individual young people 16- to 18-years-old who are NEET.



## 3.2 Main findings from the research

- The findings of this study indicate that there is a clear case that ICT has a place in supporting young people 16- to 18-years of age who are NEET.
- However, the development of the implementation of this support will not be simple. It is made more difficult because of the wide variety of differences that exist across the population of young people who are NEET.
- Any implementation will need to account for individual personal and social contexts, since differences exist in terms of social background and (in a wide number of cases) social and personal issues and problems.
- There are some strong misperceptions regarding young people who are NEET. These misperceptions can class all young people who are NEET as unwilling or uninterested. Government policy has focused mainly on the role of courses and training to support young people who are NEET as a group with limited qualifications and skills. However, the research shows that there needs to be a clear understanding of these young people's attitudes, contexts, and concerns before support can be put in place that will work effectively. Concentrating on skills and qualifications may not always address the needs of the NEET group.
- Relationships are often at the heart of both the issues that these young people face and the desires which they have. Many young people who are NEET desire to engage with work or training, but often have difficulties in handling certain forms of social interaction, such as a difficulty in handling reprimand.
- There are also wider social factors, in particular localised long-term unemployment. It is unlikely that education alone will be able to address issues such as generational unemployment and broader social interventions are needed if this kind of change is to be achieved.
- Connexions personal advisers recognise that young people who are NEET can be influenced by a wide range of traumatic, unsupportive or destructive external factors, and that these can influence the capacities of many young people to think outside a time period beyond a single day.
- Understanding the current context of young people who are NEET (and hence, potentially knowing more about how to address it), would be strengthened by having more detailed data on the kinds of young people included in the statistically unemployed groups.
- There are also gaps in data recorded by Connexions services. Technology is used by the support services, including being used by Connexions services to maintain records on young people for monitoring purposes. However, while substantial progress has been made in this area by a number of services, the current data needs to be substantially enhanced if it is to be able to identify real trends or support needs.

- Many young people who are NEET have significant problems with behaviour, relationships and self-esteem. The importance of supporting young people who are NEET through direct personal contact cannot be over-emphasised enough; an ICT provision needs to be embedded in relationships, with forms of ICT being focused on fundamental social networking in many instances.
- Young people who are NEET commonly exhibit limited capabilities to support decision making. In addition to this limited capability (in terms of decision making), other factors such as traumatic backgrounds and poor experiences of learning environments can mean that young people who are NEET often do not sustain employment or educational opportunities when these are offered to them. Young people who are NEET often engage most readily in practical and creative endeavour, and desire involvement in social environments. Many young people who are NEET have previously experienced limited education and training choices. Many tend to move in and out of a range of training and employment opportunities (which can mean that they pick up a number of successive and specific skills as a consequence). The amount of this form of 'churn' is an important characteristic of this population.
- Technology access and use by young people who are NEET is generally (and perhaps surprisingly) high. On the whole, ICT is used for communication purposes more than for information purposes. While specific technologies tend to be used for specific purposes, some are used already for purposes concerned with learning, but computers and laptops tend to be seen as workplace or education tools rather than personal tools. Lack of competence in written English is a major obstacle for some groups of young people, and current methods of teaching written English do not work for everyone. Alternative methods need to be found, and some education and skills providers are using ICT imaginatively to this end.
- Connexions services provide young people who are NEET with information about employment and training opportunities. This aspect of provision, potentially widening choices for young people who are NEET, could be expanded substantially by uses of technology.
- Connexions services do not directly influence the detail of courses and opportunities available to young people. However, they provide a vital link in terms of liaison, support, guidance and communication, and it is difficult to see that this could be offered in the same ways by providers.
- There are a wide range of different providers, supporting young people who are NEET in often quite different ways. Some providers offer workshop-based support of a practical nature incorporating uses of ICT, while other providers offer creative media facilities integrating uses of ICT. Some providers (including those offering these forms of provision) have had considerable success in working with young people who are NEET.

- Currently, ways of sharing across providers is not apparent or expected. Providers have a remit to develop opportunities, rather than to share them. This means that effective practice using ICT is not necessarily shared with others.
- Importantly, Connexions services are not specifically funded to undertake developments involving uses of ICT. Appropriate specific additional funding will be required if Connexions services are to expand their remits in these areas.
- Used in appropriate ways, the cost benefits arising from effective uses of ICT with young people who are NEET could be considerable. As Godfrey et al. (2002) say: "if 10,000 (less than 10 per cent of the estimated population of 157,000 NEET population) people were removed from the group of NEET or socially excluded young people, total current savings would be £53 million in resource costs and £55 million in public finance costs. Lifetime present value savings would be £450 million in resource costs and £520 million in public finance costs".

### **3.3 Becta's role in taking things forward**

- There are clearly ways in which ICT can support young people who are NEET. However, it will not be possible to find a single implementation solution, but a set of solutions that focus on different groups of young people, within a system that requires sufficient social intervention to engage young people who are NEET, can be identified.

If Becta recognises work in the area of NEETs as being of strategic importance, then the following issues will need to be considered.

- There are a range of actions that can be taken by Becta, both strategically, and operationally
- It is important to recognise that this current time provides an ideal opportunity for involvement and influence, since key people involved in this sector are working in a system that is in a state of flux, where practices are being questioned and established
- Becta needs to work with a range of agencies to move things forward positively. The findings of this study suggest that there is a great deal that can be done, but that different forms of activity will be required at the level of the government department (the DCSF), the LSC, 14-19 groups within local authorities, Connexions services, providers, and schools. There is a clear need for Becta to establish and maintain strategic relationships with the LSC, with local authorities and with their 14-19 groups, including and involving Connexions services
- While the DCSF has produced policy and guideline documentation to support practice in the 14-19 sector, there is a need to consider more specific policy and guideline documentation that can focus upon the needs

of young people who are NEET, since their needs are so often different from the remainder of their peer age population

- Overall, across the sector that involves young people who are NEET, there is a lack of policies and guidance regarding ICT and its funding. The DCSF offers no specific policy or guidance; the LSC has no policy or guidance with regard to funding provision specifically concerned with ICT; Connexions services have no specific remit with regard to ICT integration; and providers have no specific guidance or exemplars available to them
- There are issues of poor availability of data, with a range of current practices that focus on data management, as there are with awareness, information flow and the offering of choices for young people who are NEET. The flow of information to learners in the NEET group, for example, is not always supported to the extent that it could be by ICT
- ICT could be used to raise awareness of opportunities for young people a great deal more, not only within Connexions services, but also by providers. ICT could be used in a range of key ways to support young people who are NEET, although these uses will need to fulfil certain criteria if they are to be likely to be successful in the longer term as well as in the shorter term
- Tutors of some provider courses recognise the benefits of using ICT, as well as values arising from creative, social and practical elements within courses. The qualities of learning environments that provide for these are themselves important
- Location and timeliness are key features too; not all courses are located in places that are easily accessible, for example, especially for young people with a restricted view of "neighbourhood"
- Schools are in the best position to work on the development of alternative curriculum provision for those young people who are 14- to 16-years of age and are likely to become disengaged and to become NEET. However, the alternative curriculum is likely to be supported most effectively by using providers from outside the schools themselves
- Connexions services are best placed to work with young people who are 16- to 18-years of age and who are NEET. However, the research shows that in order to effectively support these young people they need to be categorised more effectively (in a different way from that used for monitoring purposes) and for the different needs of different sub-groups to be recognised. Working more intensively with young people who are NEET will require the service to withdraw resource from working with young people in school. Any such withdrawal will need to be balanced in terms of the support by Connexions services for developments with diploma schemes, and the gaining of important contact with young people in schools (particularly in Years 7, 8, 12 and 13). Face-to-face contact is

desired by young people; ICT interfaces are not desired as a simple substitute

- There is no single solution from an ICT point of view – solutions are clearly worthwhile for some groups in some locations at certain times. There is no ‘one size fits all’, as this is a complicated sector. Different groups, such as boys and girls, need to be recognised as possibly needing different forms and levels of support, for example. Similarly, areas with ethnic minorities and those with predominantly white British populations may benefit from different approaches
- ICT is likely to support different categories of young people in different ways. This study has begun to identify a range of potential ways of matching support categories to support using specific forms of ICT
- Some support categories are worthy of being prioritised from the point of view of action by Becta, working with other groups. These categories are: those young people who are employment and education ready (Eers) (developing mobile technology information provision to suit their specific needs); and those who are nearly employment and training ready (Neers) and those who have chosen alternative lifestyles (developing mobile technology information provision to offer them choices, access to web-based systems that will show them what is involved and what others have achieved, access to multi-practice workshops with integrated ICT, access to creative media workshops with integrated ICT, support from providers using ICT to support courses appropriately, and access to online facilities to develop and share portfolios of experiences)
- There are notable exemplars of practice in place already. Exemplars that could be extended include: ICT being used to maintain contact with young people who are NEET; ICT being used to offer ranges of ideas and choices in visual and auditory forms via websites; ICT integrated into multi-practice workshops; ICT integrated into creative media workshops; creative media workshops in mobile form; and tutors in specific courses using ICT appropriately. These forms of exemplars could be extended to other areas
- Those providers who have been successful have clearly understood their client group. This includes understanding the roles of ICT within wider social and practical support needs
- The current e-maturity framework that has been developed by Becta for use within the FE sector could potentially be usefully adapted to support providers, so that they can consider how well placed they are in integrating ICT into their practices. Developing this aspect might be most effectively done by working with 14-19 consortia
- A support pack would be likely to be seen as a valuable form of support by providers. A support pack could be developed to include an e-maturity framework, a checklist of key elements to be considered in terms of using

ICT, video exemplars, and case studies of practice. Specific ICT funding to support Connexions services and providers would be needed for this approach.

### **3.4 A future research agenda**

- The study reported here has uncovered a range of issues as well as useful practices. However, the scale of the study has been such that the findings in a range of respects have been limited
- There is a clear need for a large scale quantitative research study, to look at attitudes of young people who are 14- to 19-years of age who are likely to become, or who are NEET, to look at potential future trends, patterns of churn or flux, and to gather evidence at a level sufficient to inform with more detail about each category of young people who are NEET. In establishing a study of this form, the difficulties of engaging with hard to reach groups should not be underestimated
- Specific studies could be focused on looking at how mobile technologies could be used to maintain contact more with young people who are NEET, and what forms of web-based facilities most effectively support different categories
- Specific exploration within a wider study, or separately, could look into the reasons why young people become long term NEET. It is generally accepted that there is a need to identify early the characteristics which put young people at risk of becoming long-term NEET, but the fact that government policy now expects this group to be supported by alternative curriculum provision means that research is needed in order to demonstrate much more precisely what the outcome of this provision will be for the young people
- Other potential studies could include identifying the outcomes and impacts of young people who are NEET who become mentors, the effectiveness of different kinds of creative programmes, and the uptake of different levels of ICT provision.

## **4 Key findings and recommendations**

### **4.1 Is there a case that young people who are 16- to 18-years-old who are NEET can be supported by using technology?**

#### **The findings suggest that there is a great deal that can be done**

The study indicates that uses of ICT to support young people who are NEET are at early stages of practice. Becta, working with a wide range of agencies and institutions, could support considerable progress in this area. There are likely to be many ways in which many more young people who are NEET could be supported more effectively with ICT than they are currently.

#### **Becta should work with a range of agencies to move things forward positively**

There is a clear need for Becta to work with others in developing awareness and implementation of appropriate practices in the uses of ICT to support young people who are NEET. In this context, Becta will need to work with, and develop policies and guidance in co-operation with a range of agencies. Specifically, this will involve working with:

- Schools. It is likely that groups of schools will need to work together on alternative curriculum provision. A wider range of practice using ICT within alternative curriculum provision could be usefully explored, and guidance for schools generally could be provided on uses of ICT to support young people from Year 9 onwards
- LSC. It appears vital that policies that the LSC might support in terms of both ICT development and ICT funding to 14-19 consortia and Connexions services are considered as a matter of priority. Aims for such policy development should be concerned with generating greater involvement, as well as supporting existing developments in progress
- 14-19 consortia. The development of working practices within these groups is likely to be supported by guidelines that offer ways to review existing provision, as well as to reflect on the potential of future provision. Concepts of critical masses of ICT facilities need to be introduced as a means for 14-19 consortia to review provision within specific areas and across regions
- Connexions services. The roles of ICT within Connexions services, across Connexions services, and to support young people who are NEET, need to be much more widely established and discussed. There is a need for Connexions services to have access to ways to consider how ICT can be used with individual young people, guided by a categorisation that considers support needs of young people
- Providers. The roles of ICT in supporting young people who are NEET need to be more widely discussed and accessible to providers. Guidance

and advice, as well as funding routes, need to be accessible to providers, and Connexions services need to be able to review provision on the basis of effectiveness of ICT support as well as on the bases of other existing criteria

- **Employers.** There is a need for many employers to be aware of the roles that ICT play in supporting some young people, and that ICT can be used routinely in many educational institutions to provide a means of access and ways of working that may cease when that young person moves into employment. Providers, Connexions services and schools also need to be informed much more about the ways in which ICT is being used within certain jobs, especially as this can change dramatically over quite short periods of time.

## **4.2 How is the NEET population identified at the moment?**

### **There are a number of main agencies involved**

At this time, the working practices and relationships between agencies with specific remits to support young people 16- to 18-years of age who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) are changing. Young people 16- to 18-years of age who are NEET have, to this point in time, fallen within the remit of the Learning and Skills Council. The LSC has worked with and funded support for local authorities within areas or regions. Local authorities have used the expertise of Connexions services (although their title has sometimes varied in different regions or local authorities). Connexions services historically focused on providing careers advice and guidance, but more recently their remit has moved to include a focus on monitoring the training and employment of young people from a time prior to their leaving school, to times after they leave school (if they are NEET). To undertake that remit, the Connexions services have increasingly worked with schools, and have generated a great deal of contact with all young people while they are still within schools. When the young people become 16-years of age (at the end of Year 11), Connexions staff work with schools in finding their destinations (where known), and then follow up with specific young people who are not known to be in employment, education or training (the NEET group).

### **There are changes happening at the main agency level**

The current situation is changing, as the working practices of the 14-19 consortia become established. The 14-19 groups, based within local authorities, will take a wider remit for the monitoring and support of young people who are NEET. Two key papers outline intentions and aims for some of the working practices concerned with the 14-19 initiative (DCSF and LSC, 2007a; 2007b), but these provide guidance and direction across the 14-19 spectrum, rather than focusing on the specific qualities and needs of young people who are NEET. A part of this 14-19 remit is, and will be, to provide information for young people on training and employment opportunities, and to commission training courses and events. Connexions services have been



responsible up to this point in time for the referral of young people who are NEET to appropriate training providers. Connexions personnel, usually termed personal advisers, maintain contacts with ranges of providers who can support the young people with appropriate forms of training, work experience or employment. Discussions between Connexions personal advisers and individual young people have played a vital part in helping Connexions personal advisers to identify appropriate training or opportunities for individual young people. Referrals from Connexions personal advisers to appropriate providers, is based on a wide range of implicit and highly specific knowledge.

### **Key people involved are personal advisers within Connexions services**

Connexions personal advisers work with individuals who are NEET across a very wide spectrum, from those who are already highly qualified but uncertain of their future directions, to those who are in a downward spiral pattern associated with crime and drug taking. For many of the young people who are NEET, negative background circumstances and situations have often arisen at some time in their past, and Connexions personal advisers often find they are in the position of needing to work with young people following long periods of increasing disinterest, disaffection, disengagement and mistrust.

### **Some schools are actively putting preventative intervention measures in place**

To address the issues that arise from these long term engrained characteristics, some schools have now taken the initiative to identify and support young people who they believe could move into the NEET group in the future, and to put in place positive interventions to attempt to prevent disaffection as far as is possible. This preventative range of actions has in some schools newly arisen, so their long term outcomes and benefits are difficult to identify with certainty at this stage. However, shorter term benefits and outcomes can in some cases be identified from the preventative actions already in place.

## **4.3 What are the commonly held perceptions about young people who are NEET?**

### **Perceptions can class all young people who are NEET as unwilling or uninterested**

Young people who are NEET have traditionally been regarded, perhaps, as having not secured a place in employment, education or training after they leave school. They have often been regarded as not having taken employment, education or training opportunities, rather than perhaps their taking the time to seek opportunities, to try out a range of different options, or to find out how to find appropriate choices. What is clear from the current picture identified and presented here, is that the population of young people who are NEET is not only not homogeneous (it is not made up entirely of young people who are criminally active or drug taking, for

example), it is also highly fluid; many young people who are NEET move into and out of the NEET category many times before moving into employment, education or training for more prolonged periods of time. In essence, this fluidity can say much about characteristics associated with a range of these young people; and this is not necessarily saying a great deal about what might be believed to be lack of abilities, willingness or interests of some individuals.

Evidence indicates that:

- only eight out of 35 young people interviewed in one region did not indicate any future ambition, but others did, or had specific ideas of what they would like to do
- of 1,055 young people on a live register in one region in October 2007, only 59 had no stated career aims
- 'churn' is common, but data on this issue is sparse, although it is known that many young people (about 145,000 currently) in the 16- to 17-year-old age group are unemployed for a period of up to six months, but far fewer are unemployed for a period over 12 months (currently around 15,000 young people)
- of 1,055 young people on a live register in one region in October 2007, 305 had no formal qualifications, 159 had GCSEs at grades F or G, 271 at D or E equivalent, 151 had one to four GCSEs at grades C+, 112 had five GCSEs at grades C+ or equivalent, and 15 had A levels or equivalent.

In one inner city, in an area of high social deprivation, where young people on an active register have low levels of qualification, and low employment prospects, a personal advisor achieves a regular success rate of some 30-40 per cent.

### **The role of courses and training has been to support a group with limited qualifications and skills**

There has been an increasing recognition of the need to help a range of young people who are NEET, to help them to build life skills and basic skills. It has been recognised that many young people who are NEET do not have high levels of standard qualifications. The LSC has promoted the development of and access to a range of training courses and opportunities to offer forms of more focused support (such as E2E and pre-E2E). Training opportunities have been developed and offered by providers, including those based in further education (FE) colleges, as well as through voluntary agencies, charities, and private companies. The provision of training courses, work experience and employment opportunities has been the main means by which it has been seen possible to address what is considered to be 'the problem'. Indeed, 'the solution' is often seen as a mere need to match the interests and needs of the individual young person to this range of opportunities. Frustratingly, it has often been found (particularly by those who feel that this is 'the answer'), to not always or easily yield success.

## **There have been a specific number of approaches taken to address the issues**

There have been three basic approaches taken to addressing the perceived issues associated with young people who are NEET.

### **Approach 1: to maintain tracks on young people who are NEET.**

Keeping tracks on young people who are NEET has been adopted generally as a pattern of approach at stages prior to the provision of appropriate support. What has happened with this approach has sometimes been the development of a range of major issues that have become apparent due to the inadequacies of processes of trying to keep tracks on the young people.

### **Approach 2: to offer opportunities to young people when they are NEET.**

When young people leave school at 16, those who do not have places in employment, education and training come within the support remit of the Connexions services. Connexions services, through a variety of local centres, provide support for young people who are NEET.

### **Approach 3: to support young people before they become NEET.**

As important as their focus on guidance for those post-16 is the work of personal advisers in building up secure contacts and trust with the young people prior to their leaving schools.

The work of personal advisers in schools is not to determine the curriculum, but it is clear that building confidence, trust and opportunities through regular contact have been fundamentally important to those who have been able to support the many young people who have been NEET, who are now engaged in positive employment, education or training (and indeed sometimes that group of young people go on to support the very group from which they have moved).

To address the needs of local authorities with respect to young people who are NEET (through working groups and officers concerned with the 14-19 remit), Connexions staff in one region are based in centres that act as focal points for conurbations and more rural areas, with the majority of the work of services generally taking place in urban conurbations. This Connexions service deals with young people from 13- to 19-years of age, but their personal advisor time tends to be disproportionately taken by those at greater risk. The service supports schools directly, and in some areas Connexions services provide a daily presence. Increasingly, resources are being put in to support the pre-16 year old age group, in order to focus on preventative action. A wider inclusion approach is being taken in an increasing number of schools, so that prior to any permanent exclusion arising, schools can support through alternative curriculum provision or the 'swapping' of pupils, for example. Across a year, the service will work with all students within the age range covered. This means that in this region some 13,000 Year 11 students are

all seen at least once during the year, and for some, they are seen on a great many more occasions. Some 92 per cent of these students at the end of the 2006 to 2007 school year made a successful transition to employment, education or training.

Personal advisers are based in Connexions service centres, and work within teams. In this region, personal advisers have a workload that covers schools, colleges, and out-of-work support. Some personal advisers have specialist functions, such as working with care leavers (as this group is found to be a particularly hard group to engage), or with young unemployed people. In this Connexions service, young people have been positively encouraged to be involved in the service in a number of ways. For example, young people have been involved in inspections of the service.

#### **4.4 What is the system that supports young people who are NEET?**

##### **Connexions services maintain data records**

Connexions services need to maintain data records about young people who are NEET. These records require a categorisation of young people who are NEET in certain ways. Although this system enables records to be maintained, and offers a form of categorisation, this listing is not generally used by personal advisers when they are thinking about ways to support young people who are NEET.

Connexions services use particular categories to maintain records of young people, which have been provided from the government department. Experience in this city Connexions service has shown that placing young people within these categories is not always easy or consistent. The category of 'unemployed' can be very wide, for example, and this group is registered as unemployed with Connexions. Some will also be registered unemployed with Job Centre Plus (when they are post-18 years of age). Other young people may be grouped in categories of 'illness' (which is used for short term illness), 'unavailable on religious grounds' (there is currently no-one in this category in the city), 'not economically active' (which is used for long-term illness over 12 months or for disability), 'unavailable for other reasons' (which is used when it is not clear that any other category is appropriate, and there are currently 4 young people in this category), 'young carer' (which is concerned with those caring for relatives), 'young parents' (there are currently 103 young people in this category), 'pregnant' (there are currently 31 young people in this category), and 'personal development opportunity' (which covers voluntary work that is both paid and unpaid). Numbers of young people in each category are shown in Table 1.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number of young people who are NEET</b>
Unemployed	461
Illness	16
Unavailable (religious grounds)	0

Not economically-active	33
Unavailable (other reason)	4
Young carer	6
Young parent	103
Pregnant	31
Personal development opportunity	11
Total	665

Table 1: Number of young people 16- to 18-years of age who are NEET in the city (July 2007)

### **Connexions services provide young people who are NEET with information**

Personal advisers in Connexions services devote a great deal of time maintaining contacts with young people, taking time to find out about individual interests and identifying ambitions. They then refer the young people who are NEET to providers (and this process itself may often require a great deal of considerable ongoing support and time from the personal advisers). The system of finding possible opportunities relies upon young people gaining information, often through personal advisers. While it is recognised that the young people may not be highly literate in terms of reading and writing, and while ICT could support processes of bringing opportunities to the attention of young people, ICT is nevertheless often not used a great deal in the processes concerned with this aspect of the service.

In one Connexions centre, a personal adviser does a weekly trawl to collect together the job offers that are available. Some are identified through a wide range of websites, while others may come from sources including information provided directly by employers, from local papers, from shop windows (literally), as well as from internet searches; all of these are put onto paper in textual form on a board so that they are visible when young people visit the centre. Young people can access only those that are available via the internet using ICT. Connexions personal advisers match jobs to the young people available, and contact them. There is currently no internet or ICT-based system that provides information about all available jobs on a weekly basis. Ideas of what the jobs might entail are not necessarily explicit, and the only ways that young people might gain ideas about the jobs is from within their own minds (based on their, probably, limited experience), or from discussions with personal advisers.

### **Connexions services do not influence the detail of courses and opportunities available**

Whatever forms of opportunities are available to young people, whether these are in the form of jobs, courses, or work experience opportunities, it is clear that Connexions services cannot influence strongly the curriculum direction or need prior to the time when young people are NEET. The role of the LSC has been important in

terms of providing and supporting directions for training course development when young people are NEET, through E2E and pre-E2E provision, for example. Connexions personnel themselves may well have experiences arising from provider or training experience, or have a background within social services, but they are less likely to have had any curriculum development experience. They are much less likely to be specialists in learning, but they do know a great deal about the experiences of young people who are NEET. They often use their own ways to categorise young people who are NEET (but these categories may not help in focusing on support in any precise ways).

### **Connexions personal advisers recognise that young people who are NEET are influenced by a range of external factors**

In terms of thinking about categorisations, Connexions personal advisers are aware of the fact that supporting young people who are NEET is not only influenced by the attitudes and concerns of the young people themselves, but also by their locality, community, and family circumstances. Connexions personal advisers often discuss issues concerned with distribution patterns, how these are important, and how locality can make a big difference to attitude and forms of potential support that are likely to be successful.

The concern of many young people who are NEET in one specific area is to have access to 'instant money in the pocket'. It is found that many have a job for a month or two, but then the job may not persist beyond that time. In many cases it is found that families are not living together, so money is 'tight', and the young people want to get out, to earn money. Young people find that the benefits system pays them more than E2E. The young people also do not move outside the immediate locality to seek jobs. They tend to be insular, they do not want to travel they have close comfort zones, which tend to be reinforced by family attitudes. Many young people who are NEET in this area tend to experience background family problems, and these family attitudes are not supporting a desire to seek employment, education or training. Some families generate beliefs in young people that they will be able to gain a job no matter what their qualifications or experience are; some families are content to support young people living off benefits so there is no need for them to get a job; some young people are expected to contribute to a wider family income through money gained from benefits. Certain families have been known to 'evict young people', so that they will gain housing (as those on Job Seekers Allowance also gain housing benefit). Experience indicates that those young people who are long-term NEET, or who gain short-term well paid jobs, tend to seek these jobs for financial interests and gain, rather than for any other interest that might be gained as a result of having done the work or experience itself.

## 4.5 What is it to be NEET?

### Young people who are NEET exhibit limited capabilities to support decision making

The study highlights a wide range of 'stories' that are associated with young people who are NEET, and whilst it has been found that there are particular characteristics associated with numbers of these young people, these characteristics can also sometimes be outwardly interpreted in ways that appear to match an attitudinal 'norm' associated with all members of 'the NEET group'. In some cases this does little to cater for the real interests and needs that lie, sometimes hidden, within a protective (and even angry) shell. What is clear across the group of young people who are NEET is that decision making is a key issue for them, across all categories. Young people who are NEET generally lack a range of background capabilities that allow many of us to be involved in decision making processes (indeed, they are often seen by others as sometimes making decisions that are not appropriate, not timely, or not helpful). The features that lie behind the issues that they face in terms of decision making are:

- low levels of awareness of choices
- low levels of experience
- personal backgrounds that have brought (and may continue to bring) trauma to their lives
- low levels of trust and self-confidence with anyone outside an immediate circle of friends or family
- low levels of qualifications.

### Young people who are NEET think in particular ways

These decision making limitations tend to be linked for many young people who are NEET to particular ways of thinking. They do not tend to think in abstract or theoretical ways, and value 'real world' experiences. Many young people who are NEET think along practical lines or creative lines, rather than theoretical or cognitive lines that are more abstract.

The alternative curriculum provision offered to, and described by, five young people in Years 10 and 11 in one school indicated that the opportunities available to them had enabled them to match their lifestyle approaches and their social and emotional needs to engage with aspects of learning. One boy, for example, whilst saying that school lessons were 'boring', commented that in a work experience situation he could 'learn something new every day'. Two of the three girls maintained and persisted with periods of work experience, and were able to relate the gains that they felt were arising from this experience; the two boys had become enthusiastic about their involvement with aspects of learning and work, and as a consequence saw opportunities that might enable them to fulfil ambitions.

## **Experiences of learning environments can be dramatic**

The young people who are NEET, or who were felt to be likely to move into the NEET group from whom evidence was gathered by the study, largely expressed desires for real-life, and often socially orientated, involvement. Young people, given opportunities of these forms, often expressed their concerns about former (and less positive), experiences.

A Year 11 full-time hospitality course at an FE college involves students in work experience in their own restaurant, with customers who come for lunch time or evening meals. Part of the course focuses on front-of-house experiences. At the time of a visit, the restaurant was set up to receive a dining party, and the front of house preparation, drinks and serving, were managed by the tutor, but run by the students. One student last year did so well on the hospitality course that he is now full-time at the college doing a Level 2 Hospitality course. The boy says that this has been: "the best thing to have happened". He feels he 'grew out of school', and was in danger of 'throwing his last year away'. Now he feels he is doing something he enjoys. He says the pattern of work is different (there are no fixed breaks), the relationship is different (they have to work with the tutors), the focus is different (they have to work on 'real' things with real people). He says he wants to pursue this as a career, but that he wants to travel first.

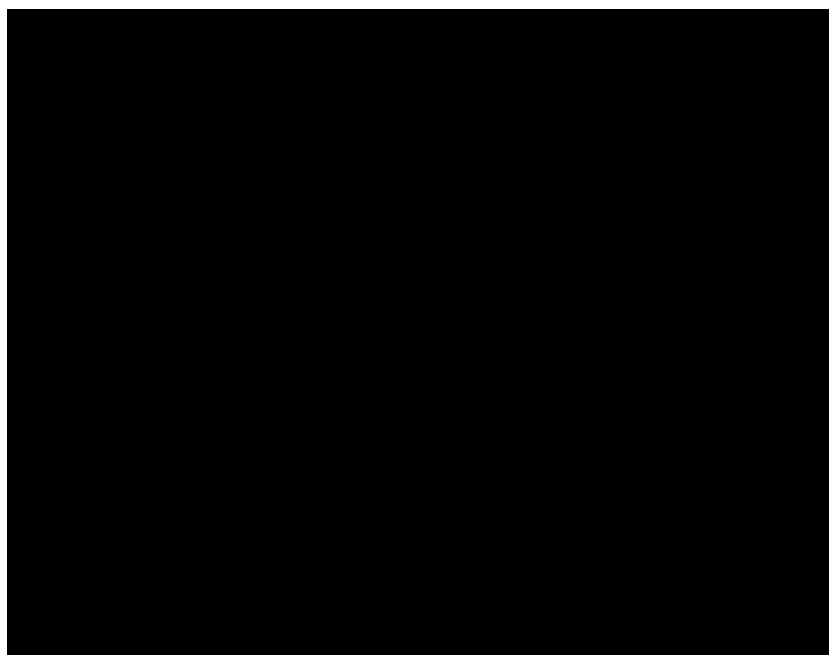
## **Technology access and use by young people who are NEET is generally high**

The study has found that young people who are NEET do not necessarily have lower levels of access to technology than their counterparts in employment, education or training. Indeed, findings indicate that they use personal technology at higher levels than might be expected.

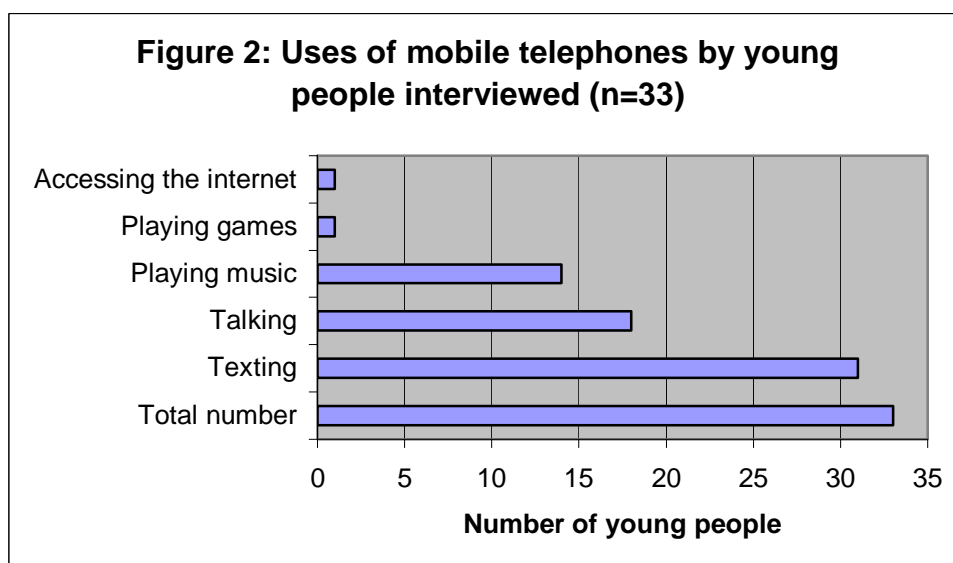
Interviews were conducted with a range of young people, mainly 16- to 18-years of age (one was 20 years of age), who were NEET. The interviews were conducted in Connexions centres and provider sites in one region, and young people were selected only on the basis of their normal attendance at those sites on specific days and their willingness to discuss points with the interviewer. In total, 35 young people were interviewed (18 girls and 17 boys).

From this sample, a surprisingly large number accessed the internet, and had access to a desktop, laptop or portable computer. It was also surprising to find that very few young people reported using desktop or laptop computers with others, while they reported using televisions, games machines and mobile telephones commonly with others around them (friends or family). Relatively few young people accessed the internet with others. It was also surprising to find that few of the young people used computers and internet access for playing games. Indeed, computers and internet access were reported to be used more for aspects concerned with education and employment than they were for playing games. Overall levels of access are shown in Figure 1.





The young people used mobile telephones widely, wherever they were, when they were on their own or with friends or family. Forms of use are shown in Figure 2.



Their uses of the internet were almost at the same level. Only one young person used it a little, 15 of the young people stated that they accessed internet on their own, while six indicated that they used it with friends or family (one at a friend's house), and one used facilities in a library. Forms of use for the internet are shown in Figure 3.

MP3 player or iPod (n=23)	Listening to music happened widely in terms of location	Listening to music
Radio (n=21)	Four listened to them on their own and four did not listen to them often. A few reported that they listened to the radio when in the car, or doing sports	Music was reported most often as the reason for listening to the radio, and some listened to specific forms of music only (such as reggae)
Laptop or mobile computer (n=12)	Most indicated that they used them at home, many in a bedroom, on their own	Uses varied, and included playing games, internet access, email, using Facebook and MySpace

Table 2: Types of technology and their uses by young people (n=35)

A questionnaire survey was run across all Connexions centres in the same region. In total, 305 young people completed a questionnaire. The young people were asked about their uses of technologies. They were asked which technologies they had, what they used them for, where, and who with. Their responses are shown in Table 3.

Technology	Have one	What it is used for							Where it is used			Who with	
		Musi c	Video	Texts	Tal k	Email	Learnin g	Findin g things	School, college , work	Hom e	Out	On my own	With friends , family
Mobile phone	279	213	153	256	262	22	19	59	99	227	247	211	207
Computer with internet	204	185	127	77	137	181	156	190	124	180	26	147	129
Laptop or palmtop	84	67	52	29	52	59	50	64	40	67	17	51	54
Games machine	201	74	60	6	15	4	25	14	7	140	20	123	125
Television	278	181	188	2	5	2	109	60	32	217	28	186	192
Radio	202	170	6	1	4	1	30	20	15	113	29	105	86
MP3 or iPod	196	187	67	5	3	3	15	7	58	115	135	135	86
Totals	1444	1077	653	376	478	272	404	414	375	1059	502	958	879

Table 3: Uses of technologies reported by young people who are NEET (n=305)

Those items where there were about two-thirds or more responses are shaded. It is clear from these responses that technologies are popular with these young people and that many young people own or have access to more than one form of technology. In order of decreasing popularity, the technologies owned or accessed by these young people are:

- Mobile telephones (mainly used for texting, talking, and music, both outside and at home, on their own and with friends).
- Television (mainly used for music, video, and for learning, at home, on their own or with friends).
- Computers with internet (mainly used for music, finding things, email and learning, at home, school, college or home, on their own or with friends).
- Games machines (used for music, at home, on their own and with friends).
- Radio (used for music, at home, on their own and with friends).
- MP3 or iPods (used for music, at home and out, on their own and with friends).
- Laptops or palmtops (used for music, finding things, video, email, talking and learning, at home, with friends and on their own).

#### **4.6 What forms of support are provided for young people who are NEET?**

##### **There are a range of different providers supporting young people who are NEET**

Providers supporting young people who are NEET can range from FE colleges, charity groups, and voluntary groups, to private providers. Generally, providers offer courses, with associated work experience, but these vary, not only in terms of the environment in which the courses operate, but also in terms of the forms of support that are accessible to the young people within the courses.

##### **Some providers offer workshop-based support**

Some providers offer courses that are workshop based. In a few cases, the workshop is a central feature, and offers opportunities across many areas of practical activity.

The workshop is a key focal aspect of this centre. It has facilities that offer a wide range of practical work opportunities: construction, plumbing, electrics, motor vehicles, bicycles, welding, patterning of glass, carpeting, concrete products and wood turning. This very wide range of applications offers a taster of possibilities for the young people; all the options are practically focused rather than theoretically focused. The centre also provides opportunities for young people to do practical work on aspects concerned with nail, hair and beauty treatment, and the numbers of girls on the course have increased. When the centre is recruiting trainers, it is their vocational experience that is sought; the centre wants people who can 'do'. The workshop contains an ICT room for research. Achievements are made accessible and recognised; there is a wall that shows the name plates that young people have created, in a variety of different ways. Workshop experiences are made 'real' where possible. Young people help to service staff cars, for example. The range of aspects, whether it be pottery, woodwork, arts or crafts, are all creatively as well as practically

focused. Some young people have built a buggy from scratch; others have created effective concrete garden ornaments. It is recognised that the young people do not achieve academically, but they can do so practically. Through this focus and environment, literacy and numeracy are covered in everything that is done. For example, tutors ask: how many bricks will it take to make this wall? Will the item fit this part of the rotor? It is found that the practical areas that the young people work on can offer contexts that are relevant to the development of mathematics and literacy.

### **Some providers offer support through creative media facilities**

Other provider centres are based around facilities that support work around topics using creative media. ICT can play a major central role where the focus is on creative media.

The work of the centre uses ICT a great deal. The centre has two suites of computers, and ICT is used in a variety of ways to engage young people. For example, 'text to speech' software is often used as an 'ice breaker', and the Apple Macintosh computers provide access to a variety of photo forms that can be manipulated easily without a great deal of prior experience. It is recognised that ICT can provide 'new' experiences. For example, animation is currently quite popular and engaging. It is reported that the reasons for this are likely to be because young people suddenly recognise how animation can be done, they see it is as something they can tackle, they want to try it out, and a few young people pursue it in the longer term. For some young people, ICT is their main medium of engagement, but the focus of use can often be quite specific, and determined by interests and the willingness of the young people. For example, young people attending from a PRU like to socially interact, but do not like to use a keyboard for writing.

The two main uses of technology in the centre are to support programmes in music technology, and others in interactive media (those involved in the latter programme can go on to create ICT-based interactive games, for example). However, there are uses of ICT of a more generic nature that are needed to effectively support young people who are NEET. For example, the centre has set up an online portfolio system

### **Successes of some providers are recognised**

The ways that providers undertake courses can make a difference to the young people, and to the successes that arise. The numbers of referrals to centres, and the rates of retention on courses, are two factors that indicate levels of success with young people.

Experience at the provider's centre suggests that courses for the young people need to start immediately. Often, their lifestyles are destructive; for example, with use of drugs. All modules on courses are self-standing so that attendance can be accommodated as far as possible. All sessions are discussion based; verbal

discussion is found to work for these young people. In a session observed, the tutor ran a drug awareness session with 6 young people (three girls and three boys). Young people from across the programme (including this group of young people) may have been involved in crime, drugs, sexual offences, sexual abuse, emotional issues, or have learning difficulties. One girl agreed to do the writing involved (although she had not done any writing for four years in school). Although it was difficult to engage the group, the discussion did allow everyone to say things and to contribute. They were all able to discuss points, and verbal discussion worked effectively for this group. Although the tutor was taking notes, all the young people took their own notes (they wrote things down that had been written on a static whiteboard). The young people attended to the topic and content of the session (fairly well), discussed points, followed ideas and wrote notes (more willingly than sometimes seen in some lessons in schools). Aspects of literacy were being covered and were happening; young people were writing and were copying what had been written.

The local authority is recognised as providing successful E2E programmes, and this centre has the largest numbers of referrals within the local authority. There have been 144 referrals in two years onto the Youth Express programme. At least 50 per cent of these referrals have progressed on to other programmes, and only seven of the 144 referrals were non-starters. Processes in place are informal, and young people are able to engage and start the programme very quickly. Most engage very quickly, and the induction process can be completed in one day. The young people do not like lots of rules; but non-attendance and lateness are not big issues. The need for appropriate behaviour at work is covered from a 'realistic' point of view.

## **4.7 Where and how is ICT being used at the moment?**

### **ICT is used in different ways and to different extents at the moment**

Given the limitations that have existed up to this point in time, it is not surprising to find that ICT is often used more for administrative purposes than it is for engaging or supporting young people directly. ICT is currently used:

- for maintaining data records
- sometimes for maintaining direct contact with young people
- not often for providing young people with ideas about the ranges of opportunities that they have available, or what these entail
- not often to support ideas of what happens when young people undertake courses or attend events, and the successes they gain
- sometimes to support writing and the creation of CVs or letters, but less often for the production of video or audio material that can be used both to reflect on practice and as evidence for portfolios.

## **ICT could be used to raise awareness a great deal more and to widely enhance choice**

ICT has the potential to increase the width of ideas and choice that many young people who are NEET lack. Choice is fundamental to many of these young people in many ways; they have had limited choice in the past; they have not experienced the same choices as others have been able to take for granted; their decisions have been based on limited choice. ICT can offer views about a great many forms of experiences, but is currently not often used by those who support or engage with the young people directly. Events fairs, specifically run to engage young people who are NEET, for example, may involve ICT in very limited ways.

An events fair was set up in the city for young people who are NEET. It was designed to provide them with ideas about the sorts of activities and courses with which they might engage. In total, 25 providers were represented (some offered a range of courses). Most of the training on offer was what might be regarded as 'fairly traditional'. The only provider using ICT in their training programmes was the provider offering media courses, where the training itself was in the use of music technologies. There were no visibly innovative uses of ICT used to support learning.

Most of the stalls had leaflets available only. Only a few offered active elements in which the young people could participate. These were:

- a hairdressing stall, with wigs and heads for young people to practice with and try out ideas,
- a beautician stall, where girls could have their nails done,
- a t-shirt stall, where lots of girls were decorating t-shirts with beads, or coloured drawings.

Only one stall was using ICT interactively. They had set up a video and laptop, and this provided a format in which the young people could design a (fictitious) event they would like to put on, plan it and then make a video advertising it, which they could take home on a DVD.

### **4.8 Are there elements of the system that show weakness?**

#### **There are some focal needs within the system that support young people who are NEET**

Two elements of the current system that are clearly important are the abilities of many agencies and groups to work seamlessly and effectively from the point of view of the young person, and the time commitment involved in providing appropriate and adequate support. If ICT could be used to support these elements, then it could be both time saving and offer benefits to the young people. The need for personal advisor time to support young people is clear, particularly in terms of helping them to gain a wide range of experiences and skills. The increasing presence of personal

advisers in schools has been time demanding, and has not necessarily enabled the same amount of time or focus for personal advisers with young people who are in the 16 to 19 age range who are NEET and outside schools. The fact that some schools are increasingly looking to put alternative curriculum provision into place could support time needed by personal advisers. However, schools are likely to need support in how to develop appropriate and successful practices.

### **There are a lack of policies and guidance regarding ICT**

The current levels of uses of ICT to engage and support young people who are NEET varies a great deal from Connexions service to Connexions service and from provider to provider. Some Connexions services have developed online ICT systems to support and engage young people. However, there is no overall ICT policy or funding policy for ICT across Connexions services. This means that development has inevitably been patchy, and whilst some practices have developed strongly and positively, no commitment of effort or funding is necessarily applied across all Connexions services.

### **Providers have no specific guidance or exemplars available to them**

Connexions services do not direct the curriculum or training developments at a course level in any specific way, so outcomes rely upon the development practices of individual providers to a large extent. Providers have no guidance in place, or policies concerned with how to consider effective uses of ICT to support young people who are NEET. Some courses use ICT to support entrance assessment when young people are referred to specific training courses, for example, but others do not.

The assessment tool used when young people are referred to the E2E course at this provider centre is 'Basic and Key Skills Builder' developed by a local FE college. This tests a current level of numeracy and literacy, and determines the level at which the young person enters the course. The young person is invited for interview, and the assessment test (online) is undertaken on the same day. An interview takes approximately one hour, to explore the young person's motivation, and previous learning

While some providers in this region use online tests to identify appropriate initial placement, other aspects of the entry procedures do not use ICT. It is quite possible that showing young people examples through still and video imagery of practice and work produced by other young people might support their understanding of what they will be involved in. It is likely that these young people need to be able to 'see' what to expect, rather than having to interpret this from a verbal discussion.

## Tutors of some provider courses recognise the value of ICT

Some courses involve uses of ICT, integrated throughout. In some cases, tutors know about and explore ranges of online digital resources to support the engagement and practices of young people.

A range of ICT resources are currently used in the E2E sessions, selected by the two tutors involved in running this course at the FE college. The ICT resources are shown in Table 4.

IT resources used	Purpose
Microsoft Office and Microsoft Windows	To deliver the new CLAIT 2006 and CLAIT+ courses
Adult Directions	Ideas for jobs. 'A career matching database where you answer a series of questions about what you like and dislike in your work' ( <a href="http://www.futureprospects.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&amp;ask=view&amp;id=95&amp;Itemid=114">http://www.futureprospects.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&amp;ask=view&amp;id=95&amp;Itemid=114</a> )
Basic and Key Skill Builder	Tests to analyse the status of basic skills ( <a href="http://www.bksb.co.uk/">http://www.bksb.co.uk/</a> )
Virtual Work Placement	Spotting hazards in the workplace
Job Explorer Database	Ideas for jobs, 'Explore over 800 jobs with pictures, videos*, quizzes and text' ( <a href="http://www.careersoft.co.uk/Products/Job_Explorer_Database/">http://www.careersoft.co.uk/Products/Job_Explorer_Database/</a> )
Animods 2	'A series of 3D-animated modules of work that will engage and motivate students to learn about a wide variety of topics. Sixteen modules focus on a range of topics from making job applications, work experience, equal opportunities and drugs issues' ( <a href="http://www.curriculumonline.gov.uk/include/resource/printproduct.asp?oid=13540">http://www.curriculumonline.gov.uk/include/resource/printproduct.asp?oid=13540</a> )
WebWise	How to use the internet and email ( <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/">http://www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/</a> )
Lifebites	Details about aspects of life skills, drugs, alcohol, relationships, in interactive forms with quizzes ( <a href="http://www.lifebytes.gov.uk/indexmenu.html">http://www.lifebytes.gov.uk/indexmenu.html</a> )

Table 4: ICT resources used in an E2E course run by tutors in an FE college

## The value of practical elements within courses is recognised by many providers

Courses will need to fulfil certain criteria if they are to be seen and used effectively by young people, according to the qualities associated with learning identified in the study. Courses will need to be sufficiently practically focused. They need to offer authentic or 'real' experiences, not just experiences based in someone else's 'real context'.

Young people who are NEET are likely to engage with courses where the amount of practical elements is high, and theory is low. Tutors running courses across one region were asked about the balance of these elements. A selected number of their responses are shown in Table 5, to illustrate differences that can exist.



Course topic	Amount of the course considered to be practical
Animal care	80%
Certificate in health and social care, and BTEch First Diploma in health and social care	At level 2 – 50-65% group discussion At level 3 – more practical, going into the community to run interviews, for example
Childcare	50%
Construction	50%
E2E	70% to accommodate any negative school experiences
E2E	35%
Furniture trades cabinet making and wood machining	75%
IT engineering	80%
Key Skills	Basic apprenticeship about 80%, advanced apprenticeship about 70%
Land-based operations	70%
Understanding retailing	40%, but try to get young people involved with real life scenarios. In the past young people have worked on 'live projects' around a local small business, with young people creating and designing a marketing campaign

Table 5: Amounts of practical work involved in courses

It is clear that there are wide variations in terms of balance. A number of the courses, however, are sensitive to the needs of young people, and there are clear attempts to involve practical elements as much as possible.

### The qualities of the learning environments themselves are important

It is clear that qualities of learning environments are as important as the learning focus. Young people who have been supported by an alternative curriculum and who have been felt to be likely to move into the NEET group after leaving school, and those who are NEET, have reported in the study on the wide differences they experience across learning environments.

Five young people supported by an alternative curriculum provision (three girls and two boys, three in Year 11 and two in Year 10), offered personal views about education and learning. Table 6 details their views about learning in different environments.

Environment	Number involved	Positive features	Negative features
School	4	Working one-to-one is good, helpful, a lot better (3), working with the mentor has let me see what I want to do, and not to get angry (1)	Lessons are boring, not fun (4), hate proper lessons (2), get into trouble in lessons (1), a lot of 'pickiness' and bullying (1), need long attention span (1)

FE college	4	Love going, enjoy it (3), can finish earlier (1), when it is done, it is done (1), are treated like adults (1), can show our uniqueness (1), can listen to music (1), get more practical advice (1), nice atmosphere (1)	None (5)
Work experience	4	Worthwhile (4), meeting new people (3), providing ambition (1), shadowing helps (1), other people found out what triggered my anger (1)	None (4), except working when cold and dark (1)
Work	1	Enjoyable (1), 'learning something new every day' (1)	Getting there (1)

Table 6: Views about learning and learning environments from young people

It is clear that school-based learning environments do not match the needs and working patterns of these young people. They have built up strongly negative views of school-based learning, associated with either the need for them to maintain a high level of attention span over what they consider to be a long period of time, or with a lack of understanding and attention in recognising their personal circumstances. This school identified the issues emerging, and provided an alternative curriculum that matched their individual approaches and needs to a far greater extent.

## Not all courses are located well

Courses may not always be located in the right place. Provider courses are often based in centres with urban populations. This can mean that those in rural or in suburban areas may not have local centre training provision. Even where this issue is addressed, some young people's interests may not be fulfilled by the courses on offer.

Across the range of courses in one region, subjects fall into a range of groups. These are shown in the right hand column in Table 7, and ease of access by young people located across the region to these subjects is described in the first two columns.

Potential level of access by young people who are NEET	Provision based on locality and spread	Subject courses
Low	Very few courses, and those available are in a single location or a small number of specific locations	Animal care and veterinary science Horticulture and forestry Travel and tourism
Limited	A range of courses, based in the main towns in one local authority only	Performing arts
Limited in some localities	Many courses, based in the main towns in one local authority only	Building and construction Sport, leisure and recreation
Wide	A range of courses, spread across main towns in both local authorities	Engineering Child development Preparation for work
High	Many courses, spread across main towns in both local authorities as well as being supported in the workplace	Foundations for learning and life Hospitality and catering

Table 7: Location of and access to courses that might support young people who are NEET

The inclusion manager in one area, offering alternative curriculum provision across a number of schools, reports that many young people on an alternative curriculum have an interest in education or training that offers practical experience and social involvement. Interests in motor vehicle maintenance, countryside skills, sports, equine skills, and land based skills are found to be common. New interests identified this year have been in first aid, bicycle maintenance, horticulture, electrical work, and plumbing. Providing for these new interests is a challenge; from this area in the north-west, the nearest centre for bicycle maintenance is in Leicester, so the group of schools has to train up a tutor, and then link this course to the young people's interests in mountain biking.

## ICT use in courses may need to be supported in specific ways

Location is not the only factor that is likely to determine a more positive match of courses to the interests of young people. Evidence indicates that ICT use within courses can support the engagement of young people, but also indicates that groups of young people may well need certain levels of specific support. For example, training on specific packages may well be needed.

Tutors running provider courses in one region were asked whether young people can use ICT easily, or whether they need a lot of support or training when using ICT. A number of selected responses are shown in Table 8, to illustrate key points raised.

Course topic	Tutor experiences of young people's ease of use of ICT
Bridging the Gap, and E2E	Yes, they can use ICT easily, 'better than me'
Certificate in health and social care, and BTech First Diploma in health and social care	They need some support, as they do not have much knowledge of Microsoft Excel. They know MSN, email, but not the finer points of word processing such as justification. The provider runs a special session for this
E2E	It is found that most are conversant with word processing, but most need help with other applications
E2E, and Work-based Learning Group	ICT abilities are monitored, and peer mentoring is encouraged
Key Skills	Generally speaking it is found that they are better on entry with ICT than they are with numeracy and number. It is found that some do need support
Learn Direct	Yes, they can use ICT easily, and courses are designed to be quite easy to work through. There are some young people with learning difficulties who need support
Understanding retailing	The majority can use ICT easily, but it is found that they do not always understand what they are doing. It is found that there is a big gap between using and understanding, and not appreciating how beneficial ICT can be. It is found that they are 'not able to think outside the box'. Flexible support is provided, so as not to single out individual students

Table 8: Whether tutors find that young people can use ICT easily or need support

Many tutors recognise that young people easily use ICT. However, it is also clear that some young people need individual support as they may not be as conversant as others, and that young people may not be very aware of the use of certain features or certain specific software packages.

## Different groups, such as boys and girls, need to be recognised as possibly needing different forms of support

It is also clear from evidence that the uses of ICT by boys and by girls can be different. Boys tend to use games machines and watch television more, using technologies to gain information or in more passive ways. Girls use certain technologies in ways more concerned with communicating, and with active

engagement. In these ways, girls use ICT that lend themselves to ways of learning more.

In terms of differences between the levels of responses of young people who are NEET across one region (153 girls and 151 boys responding in a questionnaire):

- Games machines are more popular with boys, and they use them more for music and video access.
- Televisions are more popular with boys, who use them for listening to music and for watching videos.
- Computers with internet are more popular with boys, and they use them more for video access, email, learning and finding things out.

The needs of ethnic minority groups should be considered carefully in terms of ICT facilities. For example, Muslim girls who are NEET may not be able to use facilities that are open to boys.

The mobile ICT facilities increased ICT access for a range of community members. The increased access for some was significant (for example, some Muslim mothers would not have been able to attend a broadband centre, and some young people found employment as a result of using the mobile facilities).

#### **4.9 Are there systemic aspects that could be improved?**

##### **There are a range of systemic aspects that could be improved**

At this present time, the system concerned with supporting young people who are NEET is evolving and in a state of change. There are clearly aspects at a systemic level where specific forms of focus could support young people who are NEET more effectively:

- A greater focus on how schools can identify and support young people who might be potentially NEET, through appropriate alternative curriculum provision. This focus should clearly be informed by successes identified already within existing initiatives. The use of ICT to support the development of literacy and numeracy in learning environments where small numbers of young people attend, the gathering of evidence in electronic forms (written, video and imagery) in e-portfolios, and the uses of ICT integrated into aspects of practical and creative courses, should be more widely available to young people supported through alternative curriculum provision.
- A greater focus on how Connexions services can support young people from 16-years of age, potentially reducing personal advisor time involvement in schools as alternative curriculum provision is increased, and data monitoring systems become more widely implemented.

- The development of policies that identify appropriate ICT funding for Connexions services. These policies could cover not only developments undertaken by Connexions services themselves, but also those commissioned by Connexions services.
- The development of specific guidance and advice on ICT involvement for providers, both in terms of ranges and forms of courses, and in terms of the forms of centres that should include ICT. Young people who are NEET should have opportunities to engage with provider centres that offer multi-practice workshop and creative media workshop facilities.
- The development of policies concerned with more focused support for young people who are NEET, by identifying ICT features according to an appropriate selection of categories, including gender.

#### **4.10 Is ICT likely to be a probable solution, according to the data analysis?**

##### **ICT could be used in a range of key ways to support young people who are NEET more effectively**

A key question to consider is whether young people who are NEET can potentially gain more from using ICT than their 16- to 19-year old counterparts would, and if so, how this might arise. Rather than there being a single answer, there are a set of answers to this question. There are very many different ways in which ICT could support young people who are NEET, but support for specific groups of young people will need to be considered in respect of each specific group, as ICT will not match the needs of young people in one group in the same way that it will support those in another. The evidence indicates that young people who are NEET can benefit from the use of ICT in a range of ways:

- Young people who are NEET need to see things, in order to gain ideas that might widen their horizons, their possibilities, and their ranges of choice.
- They need to have access to visual and auditory material, not just text, since their levels of reading and writing literacy are often low, but their levels of visual and listening literacy are often much higher.
- They need to have access to authentic and real-life experiences, where they are engaging with people, and working on aspects that have real aim and purpose beyond purely personal gain.
- They need to be supported with writing and reading literacies, so that they can easily retry, edit and reformulate.
- They need to have access to practical opportunities, some of which may arise through the uses of ICT, such as researching that shows video clips of how techniques are undertaken by others.

- They need to have access to creative opportunities that allow them to explore and create, in the areas of music, art, design and drama, for example.

### Uses are likely to need to fulfil certain criteria if they are to be successful

However, given this range of areas where ICT might provide support, evidence also shows that there is a need for solutions that involve ICT (as well as those that do not), to match certain criteria if they are to be of long term value and benefit for young people who are NEET. The criteria should be related to uses of ICT by young people and providers (some examples from practice observed are shown in Table 9).

Criterion	Relating the criterion to ICT uses by young people and providers
Develop a future time perspective, in order to encourage individuals to consider carefully the links between present activities and significant future goals	When a young person shows an interest in using ICT, providers should discuss with and show young people how these activities are used by others, perhaps in future employment or training situations. ICT access to visual exemplification for awareness raising is likely to support this process
Value the future, distal goals. A successful intervention must either focus upon goals to which a significant positive value is already attached, or seek to develop positive values for other goals	Providers should identify exactly what it is that the young people value when they use ICT. The aspects that are valued should be central to the goals that a provider supports when encouraging young people to use ICT in further ways
Provide adequate access to the value of the future, distal goals, and the development of the necessary information retrieval skills required to enable access to that information	Providers should help young people to recognise the steps that they need to take when thinking about how to progress their uses of ICT. Steps should be set out so that young people can identify them, achieve them, then recognise their successes. ICT that is used to build and review work through e-portfolio facilities is likely to support this process
Establish a system of proximal sub-goals that will provide the all essential bridge between the proximal activities and the longer term valued distal goal	ICT can be used to provide a 'big picture' of the steps involved, as well as offering a means to identify when steps have been achieved. ICT used to reflect on and review previous experiences and actions is likely to support this aspect
Develop relatively high levels of self-efficacy in relation to attainments required for successful completion of each of the proximal sub-goals	Where ICT is being used, providers should ensure that young people can recognise their successes, as well as identify aspects that could be improved. ICT in the form of video review could well support these processes

Develop links between the valued distal goal and a subsystem of proximal goals, so the chances of learning goals being established by participants are increased	Where ICT is used, links between steps and the end goals should be identified by the provider and discussed with the young people. However, it is vitally important that the uses of ICT are supported within a creative, practical and social environment, and not merely identified as a series of 'small step' ICT operations that become tedious for young people to complete. Some young people are readily taking to CLAIT courses if they have an interest in ICT, but many young people coming with ICT experiences are effectively being supported in their ICT development in the context of their specific interests (creative, practical or social courses or endeavours)
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Table 9: Criteria concerned with long term success and their relationship to ICT practices

## 4.11 Which approaches using ICT might work best?

### There are some notable exemplars of practice in place already

The study has identified some notable exemplars of practice where ICT has been used effectively to engage and support young people who are NEET, and where the criteria listed above have been integrated (or partially integrated where the implementation has been recent). Based on this range of successful practices, a number of approaches are proposed, which, according to the evidence available, would potentially benefit from wider application and implementation. Some of these exemplars are concerned with systemic practice, others with regional practice, while others are concerned at a provider or individual level.

### ICT could be used to maintain contact with young people who are NEET

Starting with regional pilots, uses of ICT to maintain contact with young people who are NEET could well be developed at a wide systemic level. ICT has been used in a range of locations to maintain contact with young people who are NEET. Personal advisers have increasingly used mobile telephone contact because of the number of young people who have them. Some pilots have been run to explore whether this technology might provide wider opportunities.

Some personal advisers in one Connexions service use mobile telephones routinely for maintaining contact with young people. The Connexions service has run a texting project this summer (2007), funded by the LSC. Flyers were sent to all Year 11 homes, inviting them to send in a text to gain access to a free download of a game or wallpaper. It was felt that this direct method might be used to more easily access their status and needs, and if communication could be maintained, then reminders might become more active. Sent to about 12,000 young people, the response rate was about 5.9 per cent (which is higher than the usual response rate when this medium is used). Returns to paper surveys by mail have been found to be as high as 15-25 per cent. It is reported that young people want face-to-face contact, and that the lack of face-to-face contact might explain this lower than anticipated return rate.



However, it might also be that those responding by text are not those responding through a paper medium. No negative impact arising from the trial has been identified, but the overall impact is not yet known.

### **ICT could be used to offer ranges of ideas in visual and auditory forms**

Starting with some existing regional pilots, the uses of web-based and online facilities to support awareness and choice could be developed at a wider systemic level. ICT can be used to offer ranges of ideas to young people. Some Connexions services have set up websites that provide access to ranges of ideas that are accessible not just in textual form.

On one Connexions service website, voice-overs are provided for videos that show a wide range of jobs (although the voices are adult rather than those of young people). Young peoples' voices are used on the videos describing Modern Apprenticeships (an example screen is shown in Figure 4).



Figure 4: Example screen of information provided in video form with a young person's voice-over (Source: Connexions service, 2006)

One Connexions service, working with a local authority partnership, commissioned the development of a specific website to engage young people who are NEET. There were a particular set of reasons for this commission. A field worker with a regionally co-ordinated voluntary services group visited existing NEET projects in January 2007, and identified a range of issues that were apparent at that time. Access to the projects was somewhat limited, take-up was lower than expected, and marketing

was not easy for the groups who offered the projects. It was also recognised that referrals to the projects were not happening to the extent anticipated. To address these issues, it was suggested that a website be created, so that young people themselves could see and access the projects. As a provider had previously been involved in working in this medium with young people, it was suggested that they identify what might be done.

A key idea behind the website was that young people (and those supporting them) could gain a wider picture of what was available, and what might be involved in each of the projects that were available. The website was set up to publicise courses and events run by voluntary sector groups. The courses and events, including outcomes of these, as described in audio and video by the young people themselves, were made more accessible to other young people, and to those who support them, including youth workers, for example. It had been found that young people who were NEET often needed to take a lot of short courses to build up a range of different skills. Courses tended to be limited, so it was important that the young people and those supporting them knew about the courses, when they started, when they finished, and what their intentions were in terms of skills that were developed. The field worker felt that link-ups of this type would be fulfilled most easily if there was access to these forms of details on a website. Once the website had been developed, it would then be possible to see how it might be connected to the core 14-19 prospectus site.

Feedback from a range of agencies and individuals were gathered, to gain ideas about how its potential was perceived at that time. During an event, 26 out of the 31 participants completed an evaluation form following a presentation of the website. The audience included young people as well as representatives from a range of groups and agencies.

Responses to four questions were very positive. The responses are shown in Table 10. (It should be noted that the responses were numbered on the original questionnaires, with only the extremes having descriptive labels, so the response labels shown in Table 10 have been offered as likely descriptors.)

<b>Question</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>A. Frequency</b>
1. How effective do you think this website could be as a tool for informing young people about courses on offer?	unsure	1
	somewhat	10
	extremely	15
2. How useful would this be for Connexions Personal Advisors when informing young people about options?	unsure	0
	somewhat	12
	extremely	13
3. As a voluntary organisation would you want to publicise your courses on this website?	unsure	1
	somewhat	2
	extremely	15

4. Should we use the website as a tool for informing others about projects which have already happened?	unsure	4
	somewhat	4
	extremely	17

Table 10: Responses about the potential of the website (n=26)

The responses indicated that many young people, voluntary agency representatives and key groups involved, felt that the website had longer-term potential for informing young people about courses on offer, for supporting Connexions personal advisers, voluntary organisations with their publicity, and offering ways to see what had happened on specific courses. Additional (selected) comments from those involved in the feedback event also provided some useful indications for future directions:

- "Video clips really show what the projects are about
- "The drivers of the website should be young people themselves who have gone through the process and are now refocused on achieving something
- "Need to show information on courses that have already happened in order to promote other courses
- "Archive success stories
- "Useful for having on display at events like careers conventions
- "Use more colour, 'happy colours', bright colours".

### **ICT could be integrated into multi-practice workshops**

At a provider level, multi-practice workshops integrating ICT could be developed in each region to support appropriate levels of interest and access. ICT can be integrated into multi-practice workshops, which offer a wide range of options and opportunities of a practical nature. ICT can enhance certain support needs in practical ways.

Young people attending the centre want to use and develop practical skills. They want to do practical work in mechanics, welding, body repairs, making a buggy, or plastering, for example. The practical hands-on provision in the workshop is core to the activity in the centre; everything else hangs around it. One tutor feels that literacy and numeracy can be done in practical contexts. For these young people, 'School was not for them'; they did not want a regimented classroom. Many of the young people have poor grades or are not attending school. Parent's who are drug addicts and alcoholics, and those in one parent families do not help young people to gain interests.

### **ICT could be central to the functioning of creative media workshops**

At a provider level, creative media workshops using ICT could be developed in each region to support appropriate levels of interest and access. ICT is integral to the functioning and practices that can be run within creative media workshops. A range

of these centres have achieved identifiable successes in engaging young people who are NEET.

One of the first young people who attended the centre was a member of a well-known local gang, all of whom were on bail, and in risk of being served anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs). Because of his interests, he was referred to the centre by a Connexions personal advisor. Having attended the first session, and having gained from the experience, he told other members of the gang about the experience, and they all attended the following week. From this group, two members went on to take a creative technology diploma at college, three went into full-time employment, and two have become peer mentors at the centre. It is estimated that this success saved some £80,000 for the local authority, as no ASBOs were issued.

### **Creative media workshops can be developed in mobile form**

Creative media workshop facilities need not be restricted to those who can access centres in urban areas. A pilot tackling a rural need for supporting access to creative media is using mobile facilities, with successes being recognised at an early stage of implementation.

A charity has developed a mobile facility to support involvement of young people in creative media. They have been commissioned to run a course for a group of schools as part of their alternative curriculum, and are looking at how to accredit the course. The charity is running a course with four students at one of the schools this year. The mobile facility comes to the school once a week and sets up in the school yard. The four students have been chosen to work with the van for two hours each week. They are all boys who are in danger of being permanently excluded. The problems that they pose for the school are concerned with lack of attendance, fighting, bad language and disruptive behaviour. One is a looked-after child, one had been permanently excluded but has been reinstated, one is a Polish immigrant, and one has emotional and behavioural difficulty (EBD) problems. These are the most challenging pupils in the school.

On the day of a visit, two boys were involved for most of the session. Staff present were an arts worker (who works with the van and runs the sessions), and a specialist support teacher shared between a number of schools. The boys' own year tutor and the assistant head teacher also dropped in for parts of the session. The van contains eight Apple Macintosh laptop workstations, set up on benches, with a large screen at one end of the van where any one of the laptop screens can be displayed at any time. The machines are set up with specialist music software, which enables the boys to create or record music, and then to attach it to a video. On the day of a visit, they made their own music then put it onto a pre-made video from the software. At the end of a session, they are generally given a DVD of what they have done to take home.

It was clear that the facilities engaged the young people actively. At the beginning, the boys were badly behaved, they were shouting, swearing, pushing each other, talking back to the teachers, and singing loudly over the voice of the arts worker when he was trying to show them how to use the software. But very soon, the two boys began to engage with the equipment and started to work hard, to concentrate, and to be creative. What happened could be termed transformative – the boys were like different children. They were quiet, and absorbed in what they were doing. Even when a break was taken, the change was maintained – they talked to each other, discussed what else they were going to do with the music after the break, played ball co-operatively and generally acted like ‘normal’ youngsters – a total change from their initial behaviour.

The boys gained a huge sense of achievement from making the video. Their beaming smiles and pride in what they had done were amazing to see. "That's ace!!" was a comment made when they saw what they had made. The teacher said she had never seen them sit still for so long before, and had never seen them concentrate like that. Normally they disrupt most activities. Yet all of a sudden, they had applied themselves, sat through a two hour session, created some digital pieces, and experienced success – a rarity for them. The activities were clearly very motivational, and the boys rapidly acquired the skills needed to manipulate the software. They also used it creatively, using their own initiative, for example, recording items from one of their own mobile telephones.

One of the boys was very lacking in confidence, and at the beginning of the session refused to put his name on the file he was making. But by the end of the session, when he could see what he had done, suddenly he wanted his name on it because he was proud of himself. The outcome was emotionally stimulating, revealing and satisfying, both for him and for those observing. Overall, motivational benefits that music technologies can bring were clear to see, and the ways in which they can engage young people and help them to develop specific skills. The educational gains were identifiable: application (applying themselves); retention of knowledge (acquiring a skill); and concentration.

### **Experiences of tutors in different courses need to be made more widely accessible**

At a provider level, uses of ICT need to be reviewed to ensure that full benefits are arising from the potential it offers within any creative, practical or social course or endeavour. ICT can be used to support young people in a range of ways. These include researching, creating and recording work in portfolios, and using video to review and reflect on practice.

Tutors running a range of courses across one region were asked how ICT is used in specific ways in courses. A number of selected responses are shown in Table 11, to illustrate the range of different ways that ICT is used.

<b>Course topic</b>	<b>Uses of ICT in the courses</b>
Animal care	Only a minimal amount. ICT is used for research. Portfolio work can be completed using a computer (but work can be hand-written)
Apprenticeship in animal care	Used for online testing (assessment), in key skills (young people need to produce one presentation), for research, to produce work in Microsoft Word, and young people also use cameras and videos
Certificate in health and social care, and BTech First Diploma in health and social care	Used for creating Microsoft PowerPoint presentations, for research, and number application with Microsoft Excel. Young people word process assignments
Childcare	Used for research for the technical certificate, and some learners complete work using the laptop
Construction	Very rarely. The tutor would like to have more ICT available in the classroom but there is a funding issue. Currently there is only one laptop in the classroom. Work-based learners use ICT for preparing portfolios, and for research. Those on ICA and ACA courses take photographs with mobile telephones (as evidence) then bring them to the tutor who uses blue tooth technology to download onto the laptop
E2E	Used to support job seeking skills, the writing of CVs, application letters, as well as to support basic skills, in literacy and numeracy sessions
E2E	Some take ICT as a specific unit as part of the course. There are Smartboards in the teaching rooms for use with interactive games. ICT is used in job-seeking skills, and videos are used for teaching. Word processors are used for creating CVs and letters. Digital cameras are used for recording evidence from day trips and also on the 'Working with others' module (one of the key skills)
E2E	There are dedicated ICT classes as well as using ICT being used for other work, research for projects, key skills ICT, production of posters, reports, presentation of work, and videos of residential and fund-raising events. These are all burned onto CD-ROMs for the young people
Furniture trades cabinet making and wood machining	The provider has just bought Smartboards, and the young people like them. They use ICT as part of their key skills, and it is incorporated in the work that they do (some machines will be using computerised controls). The learning in key skills is embedded into the NVQ, and these skills are incorporated within their work practices, such as use of spread sheets for cutting lists
IT engineering	Used for word processing, for research and Microsoft Excel for data recording
Land-based operations	Use of video cameras and digital cameras for evidence gathering
Learn Direct	Learning is delivered online, and learning resources include video clips, images, sound, and online assessment. Young people login to websites that cover areas such as skills for life

Table 11: How ICT is used in a range of courses

It is clear that ICT is being used across many courses to support different forms of practice, to support the development of literacy and numeracy skills, for the gathering of evidence, and to support reflective practices by looking at recordings from digital cameras and video.

### **A summary of different approaches with ICT that should be developed further**

Evidence indicates that the forms of ICT that should be supported for use with young people in appropriate ways are:

- Facilities using mobile technologies to support contact with personal advisers, not just for arranging meetings, but also for providing key elements of information that would be of value to individual young people. This area is likely to be exploratory and developmental in a range of respects.
- Websites that provide ideas about opportunities available, as well as what is involved, and what young people's experiences and successes have been with them, in forms that provide visual and auditory access as well as textual access. This area can build on developments that have already been undertaken.
- Multi-practice workshops that integrate ICT for research and other purposes. The idea of critical numbers of multi-practice workshops would be worth exploring in this context, to identify the number of workshops that might be needed in any locality or region. This aspect can build on the successes that have been identified in some locations already.
- Creative media workshops that use ICT in a central way. The idea of critical numbers would also be worth exploring in this context, to identify the number of workshops that might be needed in any area or region, and accounting for the need for some to be mobile facilities. This area can build on the successes that have been identified in a number of locations.
- Facilities within specific courses, tailored to the needs of the course, and building on the successes that have been identified in specific situations. The range of ICT should cover aspects of online testing, interactive digital resources or games focusing on specific skills, research, data recording and numeracy work, portfolio work, presentations, report writing, written work and literacy work, creation of CVs and application letters, evidence gathering, and recording practice using digital cameras and video.

## 4.12 Which approaches accommodate categories of young people who are NEET, including gender groups?

### Young people who are NEET can be categorised more effectively for support purposes

Young people who are NEET are not a homogeneous group. The study indicates that there are a number of discrete categories that are identifiable, and that each can be described by a number of different characteristics:

- **Eers:** This group would include those who churn in and out of low level jobs and training courses of one kind or another but who need help finding more sustainable employment. It would also include those in periods of transition who have chosen or are mapping out a path (for example, waiting for a course to start, travelling before settling down to a job). Others might be job-ready but geographically isolated and living in locations where there is no work or public transport, temporarily sick, or unable to afford childcare. They are ready for employment or education but unable to achieve it for extrinsic reasons
- **Neers:** This group are nearly ready for employment or training and may need help with things like application forms, transport, finding a suitable opening, upgrading or improving their skills, gaining confidence, learning to relate to others, improving their behaviour and becoming better at managing relationships at work. It may also include immigrants with good employment skills but poor English language skills, or those with some kinds of disabilities
- **Mulps:** This group have multiple long-term problems which will include several of the following: mental illness, criminality, drug and alcohol dependence, debt, poor housing, low basic skills, challenging behaviour, disadvantaged family backgrounds, poor neighbourhoods, low expectations, second or third generation unemployment, chronic illness and disability (including special learning needs), being a care-leaver, homelessness. These young people need the intensive intervention of a number of agencies. For this group, lack of employment or education is not the key issue and their other problems need addressing before they will be ready to hold down a job or successfully complete a training course
- **Alts:** These are the young people who have chosen alternative lifestyles. It will include those who: are concentrating on developing self-employed careers in arts or music; are setting up a business which has not yet proved successful; have chosen motherhood as an option and intend to stay at home while children are small; or are working in the family business and not seeking outside employment.



## ICT is likely to support different categories in different ways

There are likely to be differences in terms of the ICT that will support each of these different groups. An outline of possible uses, according to the evidence from the study, is shown in Table 12.

Form of ICT	Eers	Neers	Mulps	Alts
Use of mobile technologies to support contact with personal advisers	✓	✓	✓	✓
Use of mobile technologies to provide key elements of information targeted for specific individual young people	✓	✓	✓	✓
Websites that provide ideas about opportunities available, what is involved in each of these, and what young people's experiences have been with them, in visual and auditory forms as well as textual forms	✓	✓	✓	✓
Multi-practice workshops that integrate ICT for research and other purposes		✓	✓	✓
Creative media workshops that use ICT in a central way		✓	✓	✓
Facilities within specific courses, tailored to the needs of the course		✓	✓	✓
Online testing		✓		
Interactive digital resources or games focusing on specific skills		✓	✓	
Research	✓	✓	✓	✓
Data recording and numeracy work		✓		
Portfolio work	✓	✓		✓
Presentations	✓	✓		
Report writing		✓		
Written work and literacy work		✓		
Creation of CVs and application letters	✓	✓		✓
Evidence gathering and recording practice using cameras and video	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 12: Forms of ICT to support different categories of young people who are NEET

## Other characteristics should also be considered when support using ICT is being identified

Additionally, there are a number of other characteristics that should be considered. These additional characteristics also indicate potential differences in terms of forms of ICT that could be used in supportive ways, shown in Table 13.

Characteristic	Factors when considering ICT likely to support this group
Boys	Games machines are more popular with boys, and they use them more for music and video access. Televisions are more popular with boys, who use them for listening to music and for watching videos. Computers with internet access are more popular with boys, and they use them more for video access, email, learning and finding things out.
Girls	Mobile telephones are less popular with girls for watching videos. Computers (including laptops) with internet access are popular with girls for learning and finding things out, using them on their own a great deal. Radios are more popular with girls for listening to music.

Ethnic minority groups	The number of boys who are NEET may well be higher in ethnic minority groups. Use of cybercafé facilities in some areas has proved popular. Over a period of two years, the use of the cybercafé facilities in one area indicated that access for purposes concerned with employment and jobs was higher than access for purposes concerned with training (963 recorded uses for employment and jobs compared to 256 recorded uses for training). Levels of access for email were high, suggesting that this was a commonly used means of communication by many people, including those who did not have access within their own homes necessarily. Levels of access for purposes concerned with education was also high. This suggested that training might not be regarded highly by the community accessing opportunities through these routes.
Deaf and hard of hearing	It is felt that a greater focus on visual literacy and visual English could support the 'inner talk' that would help deaf people. It is felt that young deaf people need a structure to work in, but not a strong form of control; they need a freedom to engage. Technology makes things worse at the moment – English is the medium that deaf people cannot read. Deaf young people are often better at mathematics – it appears to be due to the visual aspects of it, but they still cannot necessarily access the English in examination papers.
Mild learning difficulties	It is found that young people with MLD 'learn to cope', partly by using the same devices that their peers are using, but they may not understand certain things about their use in depth. One young person with SEN (special educational needs) in a mainstream school class, for example, could not read the questions for the theory driving test; this young person was not working at the same level as peers in the class. Socially there are often pressures and necessities placed on young people with young people with moderate learning difficulties may use a technology and find ways to do so, such as using DVDs. But beyond school such technologies may not have the same social value. Some technologies are concerned with providing social links for young people, such as mobile technologies, so that young people are seen as 'being like other people'.

Table 13: Factors when considering ICT to support different groups of young people who are NEET

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## Appendix 1: Evidence base

The evidence base, which supports the findings reported here, consists of:

- 53 young people interviews. These comprised 47 interviews using a single interview schedule, to gather details about types of technology used by young people, what forms of technology they use, and where, their positive and negative reflections about learning and work experiences, their interests, ambitions, current barriers they find to achieving these, and ideas about future uses of technology to support learning and work. Within these 47 interviews, eight were conducted with young people who were supported by an alternative curriculum in two schools and believed to be likely to become NEET in the future, 35 were conducted in a single region, and four in another region. These 47 interviews formed the basis of primary evidence in the Background Report. Evidence from another six interviews supplemented that from the major group of interviews. This latter group of interviews were undertaken within training provider and work experience settings, and were focused on gathering reflections about the young people's experiences prior to engagement within those settings, and since being in those settings.
- 305 questionnaire returns from young people who are NEET. These responses were gathered from across a single region, and this primary evidence was used to support and add to the evidence from the interviews.
- 50 key informant interviews. This evidence, of a primary nature about the practices reported, and of a secondary nature about experiences and attitudes of young people themselves, was used to support the primary interview evidence, and to provide additional or contrary perspectives where these arose.
- 21 training provider interviews. This primary evidence, gathered by telephone interview in the case of 18 providers, and by face-to-face interview and observation in the case of the other three, reported aspects concerned with entry procedures to training courses, practices for admission, the nature of training provision, uses of ICT within training courses, and tutor experiences with young people. This evidence was used to support that gathered from interviews with young people.
- Additional evidence, used to support interview perspectives or to provide additional perspectives, was gathered from observations of provider sessions (six), documents provided by key informants (nine), reports from key informants (eight), sources from websites provided by key sources (seven), examples of resources created by young people (five), and an observation of work experience.