

National Assembly for Wales

Young People not in Education, Employment or Training

September 2011

This paper highlights policies and provision that exist for young people not in education, employment or training in Wales. Strategies can cut across many different policy areas and are developed at UK, Welsh and local level. The picture of provision is complex.

The paper looks at some of the challenges that exist for policy makers and agencies working in this policy field, and examines stakeholder views on what types of support work best for young people not in education, employment or training or at risk of becoming so. It also highlights some of the particular challenges facing these young people.

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Enquiry no: 11/0927

National Assembly for Wales

Young People not in Education, Employment or Training

September 2011

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Paper number: 11/051



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Summary

This paper highlights policies and provision for young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) in Wales. Strategies cut across many different policy areas and are developed at UK, Welsh and local level. The picture of provision can be complex, and the importance of coordinating provision and integrating policies is often discussed in relation to the 'NEET' debate.

There is an association between poverty and low educational attainment in Wales, and the importance of prevention and early intervention in relation to those at risk of becoming NEET is also often highlighted by commentators.

The percentage of young people who are NEET in Wales has remained relatively unchanged for the past ten years.¹ NEETs figures are also a concern for other UK countries, and some regard tackling the issue as a particularly 'intractable' policy problem.²

While debate exists as to the form strategies should take and how they should best be implemented, however, specific projects delivered at the local level can represent a 'vital lifeline'³ to individuals who are NEET.

This paper also looks at some of the challenges for policy makers and agencies working in this policy field, and highlights some of the particular challenges facing young people who are, or who are at risk of becoming, NEET. Other issues covered include the following: what sort of provision is or should be available to reach young people who are not in employment, education or training, and at what level (UK; Wales; the local level); what are some of the approaches used in relation to young people not in education, employment or training; and stakeholder views on what types of support work best for young people not in education, employment or training or at risk of becoming so.

¹ Welsh Government, *Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) (Year to 31 December 2010)*, 27 July 2011 (Table 1: Young people not in education, employment or training in Wales, Calendar Year). [Accessed 16 August 2011]

² Demos, www.demos.co.uk, Sodha, S., Margo., J, "*A generation of disengaged children is waiting in the wings*", 2010 [Accessed 16 August 2011] and Institute for Welsh Affairs, *Engaging Wales' Disengaged Youth*, November 2010, p3. Available in Members' Library

³ Institute for Welsh Affairs, *Engaging Wales' Disengaged Youth*, November 2010, p3. Available in Members' Library

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Young people not in education, employment or training

1. Introduction

The term 'NEET' describes a statistical cohort of young people who are not engaged in any form of education, employment or training. Statistics are collated for the 16-18 and the 19-24 age groups separately.

In practice, the NEET 'group' is highly diverse and includes young people who are unemployed and looking for work as well as those classed as 'economically inactive'. Some of those in the cohort may have caring responsibilities and/or various other complex needs and some may be 'transition' or 'gap year' NEETs.

The percentage of young people who are NEET in Wales has remained relatively unchanged for the past ten years.⁴ NEETs figures for other parts of the UK are also a concern and recent economic conditions present an additional challenge in addressing these issues.

The reasons why young people become NEET are varied and complex. An Institute of Welsh Affairs report refers to the 'tangle of issues' involved in reducing the numbers who are NEET, and notes that the process of acquiring NEET status can begin very early on in life.⁵ Risk factors may include young people experiencing physical and/or emotional abuse at home; young people for whatever reason becoming distanced from professionals at school; young people having drifted to 'marginal' provision such as a Pupil Referral Unit⁶; teenage parenthood and poor levels of literacy.⁷ While for many young people disengagement from education, employment and training may be as a result of experiencing multiple barriers and problems, there are also those who may unexpectedly become NEET perhaps owing to a single life event, for example bereavement in the family.⁸

2. The numbers

In its 2006 document, *The Learning Country: Vision into Action*⁹, the Welsh Government set a target that the percentage of **16-18 year olds in employment, education or training reach 93% by 2010.**

⁴ Welsh Government, *Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) (Year to 31 December 2010)*, 27 July 2011 (Table 1: Young people not in education, employment or training in Wales, Calendar Year). [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁵ Institute for Welsh Affairs, *Engaging Wales' Disengaged Youth*, November 2010, chapter 4 Available in Members' Library

⁶ *Ibid*, p40

⁷ *Ibid*, pages 3 & 46

⁸ Welsh Government, Leighton Andrews (Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning), *Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan 2011 - 2015*, Cabinet Written Statement, 12 January 2011. [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁹ Welsh Government, *The Learning Country: Vision into Action*, 2006. [Accessed 16 August 2011]

The Welsh Government publishes two different sets of statistics relating to people who are not in education, employment or training in Wales. The Statistical First Release ('SFR') *Participation of Young People in Education and the Labour Market* is published annually in July, and the Statistical Bulletin *Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)* is published four times a year (in January, October, April and July).

2.1. Statistical First Release: Participation of Young People in Education and the Labour Market

The SFR *Participation of Young People in Education and the Labour Market*¹⁰ is the definitive Welsh Government source for estimates of the proportion of young people who are NEET in Wales.

The most recent SFR (published in July 2011) provides final data for 2009 and provisional estimates for 2010. Participation in education and the labour market is estimated using population, education and work-based learning data along with data from the Annual Population Survey to estimate labour market status. The following table from the release shows that in 2010, **11.0 per cent of 16 to 18 year-olds and 22.8 per cent of 19 to 24 year-olds in Wales were estimated to be NEET.**

Table 1: Estimated participation in education/training or not engaged in education or training *nor* in employment (NEET)

Year End	<i>Per cent</i>			
	16 to 18 year olds		19 to 24 year olds	
	In education or training	NEET	In education or training	NEET
Persons				
2004 (r)	73.1	11.6	39.0	16.1
2005 (r)	74.5	10.3	39.1	17.5
2006 (r)	75.4	10.0	38.5	18.0
2007 (r)	74.3	11.8	37.4	17.6
2008 (r)	75.9	12.4	36.3	17.6
2009 (r)	78.2	12.2	37.1	22.0
2010 (p)	80.1	11.0	38.6	22.8

Source: ONS, HESA, Welsh Government, Annual Population Survey, as referenced in SFR *Participation of young people in education and the labour market, 27 July 2011*

(p) Data for this year are provisional.

(r) Data for this year have been revised.

¹⁰ Welsh Government, *Participation of Young People in Education and the Labour Market, 2009 and 2010 (provisional)*, 27 July 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

The SFR also provides estimates of the proportion of young people who are NEET for each UK country for the years 2009 and 2010, and shows that **Wales performs the worst for the 19 to 24 year-old category**. These estimates are made using data from the Annual Population Survey **only**, and are not therefore directly comparable with other sets of data in the SFR.

Table 2: Estimates of the proportion of young people not in education or training *nor* in employment (NEET), by age and UK country, 2009 and 2010

	<i>Per cent</i>			
	16 to 18 year olds		19 to 24 year olds	
	2009 (r)	2010	2009 (r)	2010
Wales	11.9	11.5	21.3	23.2
England	11.1	10.7	18.7	19.3
Scotland	13.0	13.6	17.6	18.4
Northern Ireland	9.7	7.1	19.2	19.8
UK	11.2	10.9	18.7	19.4

Source: Annual Population Survey, as referenced in Statistical First Release, *Participation of young people in education and the labour market*, 27 July 2011

(r) Data for this year have been revised.

2.2. *Statistical Bulletin: Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)*

In between the annual publication of the SFR, the Welsh Government also publishes a Statistical Bulletin *Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)*¹¹. The most recent Bulletin was published in July 2011, and the next is due out in October 2011 (provisional). The Bulletin includes analysis by gender, age and region.

Using the Annual Population Survey, these statistics are based on relatively small sample sizes of 16-18 year olds and are **statistically less robust** than those published in the SFR. Care should be taken when comparing estimates from the Statistical Bulletin (which use Annual Population Survey data) with those from the Statistical First Release (which use population, education and work-based learning data along with data from the Annual Population Survey).

The main focus of the Statistical Bulletin is the 16-18 year old age group, although equivalent statistics for the 19-24 year old age group are also given in the tables for completeness. For the year **ending Quarter 4 2010, 11.5 per cent of 16-18**

¹¹ Welsh Government, *Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) (Year to 31 December 2010)*, 27 July 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

year olds were NEET compared with 11.9 per cent for the year ending Quarter 4 2009.¹²

Careers Wales undertakes an annual survey of leavers from maintained schools in Wales to obtain their destinations as at the end of October each year.¹³ This provides estimates of young people who are NEET in the October **after completing Year 11** and is available at a local authority level and is provided in the Bulletin. Pupils from special schools are included in the survey, although those attending FE colleges and independent schools are not.¹⁴ The survey can be used to consider relative levels of young people who are NEET by local authority.

The most recent data is set out below:

Table 3: Year 11 Leavers for Schools in Wales known to be not in education, employment or training by Unitary Authority

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Wales	7.0	6.8	6.4	6.9	7.1	5.7	5.4
Isle of Anglesey	4.5	5.8	7.0	6.7	8.1	5.2	5.3
Gwynedd	6.2	4.6	5.4	4.4	5.7	4.2	3.6
Conwy	5.6	5.7	7.9	5.5	5.7	4.8	3.7
Denbighshire	6.3	6.3	6.0	4.9	6.2	4.4	4.4
Flintshire	5.4	4.9	3.9	4.6	7.2	3.7	2.8
Wrexham	8.5	7.3	8.1	8.9	9.6	5.0	4.2
Powys	4.4	4.8	3.0	5.3	3.0	2.1	2.9
Ceredigion	3.4	3.6	2.2	2.6	3.8	2.3	2.3
Pembrokeshire	5.2	6.6	3.6	4.7	6.4	4.8	4.8
Carmarthenshire	5.0	5.7	5.4	5.5	4.4	4.0	2.9
Swansea	12.2	8.5	8.0	5.8	5.8	6.4	4.2
Neath Port Talbot	10.6	8.1	7.0	9.0	7.7	7.1	6.6
Bridgend	6.7	8.2	6.8	7.3	8.0	7.6	7.1
The Vale of Glamorgan	4.1	6.4	5.2	6.8	6.2	5.6	4.6
Cardiff	7.4	8.4	8.8	8.5	10.6	8.9	8.8
Rhondda, Cynon, Taff	6.0	5.0	5.1	7.5	6.1	4.9	5.7
Merthyr Tydfil	6.4	11.4	7.3	7.9	7.8	4.6	7.6
Caerphilly	8.1	7.8	6.8	7.1	7.1	5.0	6.0
Blaenau Gwent	10.3	8.8	8.1	10.4	9.7	6.6	8.7
Torfaen	6.7	6.9	7.9	10.5	10.1	8.2	7.0
Monmouthshire	4.0	4.6	4.8	5.6	5.3	5.0	3.9
Newport	9.2	9.2	9.0	9.3	10.4	9.1	7.5

Source: Careers Wales Pupil Destinations from Schools in Wales, as referenced in **Welsh Government Statistical Bulletin, *Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)***, 27 July 2011

¹² *Ibid*, p1.

¹³ *Ibid*, p7

¹⁴ Welsh Government, *Pupil Destinations from Schools in Wales, 2010*, and Careers Wales, *Pupil destinations from schools in Wales. 2010* [Accessed 16 August 2011]

In 2010, the Third Assembly's Enterprise and Learning Committee conducted an inquiry into provision for young people not in education, employment or training in Wales. Careers Wales stated in its evidence to the inquiry that the Welsh Government should 'use and enhance the data management capacity of Careers Wales rather than develop a new national tracking and management information system for young people who are NEET'.¹⁵ In its report the Committee stated that:

We recommend that as part of the review of Careers Wales, the Minister [for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning] should seek to strengthen its performance in managing a national register of young people not in education, employment or training that is both consistent and comprehensive, and also in maintaining a database that can match job vacancies with unemployed young people. We further recommend that the Welsh [...] Government keep a monitoring role on performance in this area.¹⁶ [My emphasis]

The Welsh Government accepted this recommendation in principle, stating that Careers Wales' existing database might usefully form the cornerstone of a more comprehensive tracking and data management resource for NEET young people linking in the 'keeping in touch' developments. It stated that a similar recommendation was included in its 2010 report on careers services in Wales¹⁷ and 'will be considered upon the unification of Careers Wales as part of the Customer Relationship Management system developments'. Development of the recommendation will, however, be 'fully dependent on the structure, budgets and relative priorities for Careers Wales in the future'.¹⁸

In relation specifically to young disabled people, the Enterprise and Learning Committee's inquiry recommended that:

Recommendation 3. Given that young disabled people are twice as likely to be not in education, employment or training as non-disabled people, we recommend that Welsh Assembly Government statistical publications should routinely analyse data in relation to disability and young people that are not in education, employment or training.¹⁹

The Welsh Government accepted this recommendation again in principle, stating that it would investigate the robustness and suitability for publication of analysis of young disabled people who are NEET.²⁰

¹⁵ *Evidence prepared by Careers Wales (CW) for the Inquiry into Young People who are Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET)*. [Accessed 1 August 2011]

¹⁶ Enterprise and Learning Committee, *Young people not in education, employment or training*, 15 October 2010

¹⁷ Welsh Government, *Future Ambitions: Developing careers services in Wales*, 2010 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

¹⁸ *Welsh Government Response to the Enterprise and Learning Committee's recommendations in the report: Young People not in Education, Employment or Training*, 5 January 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

¹⁹ Enterprise and Learning Committee, *Young people not in education, employment or training*, 15 October 2010

²⁰ *Welsh Government Response to the Enterprise and Learning Committee's recommendations in the report: Young People not in Education, Employment or Training*, 5 January 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

3. Key issues and factors

Policies relevant to young people referred to as not in education, employment or training cut across a wide range of disciplines at both the Welsh and UK levels, including economic development, child poverty, mental health, education, training and skills, health and well-being, transport, drugs and alcohol, equality, youth, benefits and housing. While the cross-cutting nature of the issue can be viewed as an advantage, for example in terms of accessing funding, it also poses considerable challenges for agencies to think and work together on addressing solutions.

The merits or otherwise of using the term 'NEET' when referring to this cohort of young people has also been the subject of some debate. Some commentators are not comfortable with the use of the term 'NEET' as a noun, or as a 'label' for these young people.²¹

3.1. Early intervention

According to a report published by the think tank Demos:

For young people, being NEET is associated with a host of poor employment and health outcomes later in life, and a greater likelihood of offending and ending up in prison.²²

The report goes on to state that 'one recent estimate suggested the cost of each person who is NEET between the ages of 16 and 18 in the UK, is almost £120,000 in 2009 prices, accounted for by the costs of unemployment, health services and the criminal justice system', and that 'this puts the cost of the current generation of 16-18-year-olds who are NEET at over £31.3 billion over their lifetimes'.²³

The authors of the report argue that 'policy initiatives have not worked to combat this seemingly intractable problem, largely because they are designed to impact too late, when a young person's disengagement from their education is already endemic'. The report also highlights the importance of tackling underlying causes of disengagement, such as poor literacy and numeracy and support with parenting in the early years.

In announcing its *Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan 2011*, the Welsh Government said that:

Evidence has shown that support in the earliest years of a child's life is the most effective way of improving life chances, breaking the cycles that can exist for some of our most

²¹ Welsh Government press release, *NEET not a noun*, 8 February 2010, and Institute for Welsh Affairs, *Engaging Wales' Disengaged Youth*, November 2010 [Accessed 16 August 2011 Available in Members' Library

²² Demos, www.demos.co.uk, Sodha, S., Margo., J., "*A generation of disengaged children is waiting in the wings*", 2010 [Accessed 16 August 2011]. Summary of report, see [pages 13 to 35](#) of report.

²³ *Ibid*

disadvantaged and vulnerable children, and providing a chance to grow, succeed and achieve.²⁴

The importance of early intervention and support in relation to young people who are, or who are at risk of becoming, NEET was also underlined in evidence submitted to the Enterprise and Learning Committee's inquiry into provision for young people not in education, employment or training.²⁵

3.2. *Child poverty and relationship to NEETs*

Evidence suggests there is link between child poverty and low educational achievement.

According to a Bevan Foundation report:

In Wales there is a strong link between child poverty and low educational attainment. Data for 2008 shows that 61.9% of children aged 15 who were not eligible for free school meals achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grade A-C compared with 28.0% of children who were eligible for free meals. The findings at other Key Stages show a similar pattern.²⁶

In evidence to a Children and Young People Committee inquiry into child poverty²⁷, Professor David Egan, Director of UWIC's Wales Institute for Applied Education Research,²⁸ stated that:

Socio-economic class in Wales is a dowry leading to low educational performance and in the vast majority of cases the more of them that bring that dowry with them to their place of education, the worse they and it will do.²⁹ [My emphasis].

In his view:

The current strong, enduring and symbiotic association between poverty and low educational achievement in Wales represents nothing less than a blight on our nation, the life-chances of a significant number of its citizens and the wider aspirations of the Welsh [...] Government to create a prosperous country at ease with itself. [My emphasis].

In discussing the link between poverty and disadvantage and low educational achievement, another Bevan Foundation report states that:

A growing and increasingly robust corpus of research-based evidence exists on the reasons why poverty and disadvantage can lead to low educational achievement. This evidence points to the following dominant factors:

²⁴ Welsh Government, Leighton Andrews (Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning), *Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan 2011 – 2015*, Cabinet Written Statement, 12 January 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

²⁵ Enterprise and Learning Committee, *Young people not in education, employment or training*, 15 October 2010 [Accessed 1 August 2011], and *Oral and written evidence and responses to call for evidence* [Accessed 16 August 2011]

²⁶ Bevan Foundation in partnership with Consumer Focus Wales, National Energy Action Cymru and Save the Children with additional material by the New Policy Institute, *Paying the Price of Being Poor*, November 2009

²⁷ Children and Young People Committee, *Follow up inquiry into child poverty: eradication through education?* (2011), follow up inquiry to *Poverty in Wales: Eradication through Education?* (2008) [Accessed 16 August 2011]

²⁸ UWIC Press Release, *Professor Studies Performance of Under-privileged Children in Wales*. [Accessed 3 August 2011]

²⁹ Evidence to Enterprise and Learning Committee's inquiry into provision for young people not in education, employment or training, *Educational equity and school performance in Wales* [Accessed 16 August 2011]

- The critical influence of the level of education of parents, particularly of the mother.
- **The important influence of neighbourhoods and places, particularly in relation to disengagement of older school students (14-16 year olds) and the tendency for them to become NEET.** [My emphasis].
- The attitude held by parents and particularly young people themselves to the value of education, including their attitude to higher education.
- Resources within the home environment, particularly access to a computer and the internet.³⁰

The report goes on to state that, '[while] some of the above are factors that schools can attempt to influence, [...] there are others where schools, or schools alone are not able to respond'. It also says:

The recently developed field of research relating to student aspirations and attitudes to progression into higher education, for example, suggest that whilst schools can play an important part, individual student, peer, family and **neighbourhood influences are much stronger**.³¹ [My emphasis].

Examples of community approaches to learning and engagement across the UK include the Challenge programme in England that operates in London, Greater Manchester and the Black Country and the Heads of the Valleys Education Programme in Wales. These are discussed later in this document (on pages 21-22).

The Welsh Government states in its *Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan* that its approach to youth engagement and employment will include 'analysing NEET hotspots with a view to sharing good practice'.³²

3.3. *Schools and the curriculum*

The role played by teachers in identifying pupils at risk of becoming NEETS has been the subject of some discussion, and an article published in the Times Educational Supplement Cymru reports the following views on the issue:

Neet expert Howard Williamson, professor of European youth policy at Glamorgan University, said teachers have a responsibility to be the "first alarm bell" for pupils at risk of becoming Neet.

"The whole population of children go to school, so there should be a duty on teachers to spot problems that may have an impact on their lives," he said. "It's absolutely sensible, both socially and economically, to get in there as early as possible - prevention rather than intervention."

³⁰ Bevan Foundation, *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Wales*, December 2010, p76 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

³¹ *Ibid*

³² Welsh Government, Leighton Andrews (Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning), *Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan 2011 - 2015*, Cabinet Written Statement, 12 January 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

Rex Phillips, Wales organiser of teaching union the NASUWT, said most teachers see it as part of their role to spot pupils at risk of dropping out of school and would welcome the training.

But he said “appropriate external agencies” should do the follow-up work, not teachers.³³

One of the actions points of the Welsh Government’s Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan 2011-15 is:

Through the continuous professional development (CPD) of teachers, ensure awareness of dealing effectively with pupils at risk of becoming NEET.

A Bevan Foundation report refers to evidence from the US on the importance of **high quality early years education and continuing support in 8 to 14 education** in enabling disadvantaged students ‘to achieve the ‘exit velocity’ that will enable them to succeed as older students and young adults’.

The report also makes reference to a 14 to 16 curriculum ‘that engages all students, enables them to achieve their potential and is supported by intervention strategies that tackle disengagement and low aspirations’³⁴ and states that ‘there is strong evidence that this is the **tipping point** in relation to students participating in education and training, including higher education, post-19’. It says:

‘if they continue to be engaged between the ages of 14 and 16 and are able to achieve a Level 2 qualification (the equivalent of five higher grades at GCSE) then they are much more likely to proceed post 16 and then post 19’.³⁵

3.4. Homelessness and housing difficulties

Many individuals who use housing-related support and homelessness services are NEET or have been NEET.³⁶

In evidence to the Third Assembly’s Enterprise and Learning Committee, Cymorth Cymru said that ‘provision in this non-mainstream setting, by third sector providers, [is] a **key delivery mechanism within the NEETS agenda**’. [My emphasis].

It also said that ‘often the individuals supported in [the housing related support / homelessness] sector are disengaged with formal education or employment programmes, but flourish in familiar surroundings where they have a strong trust-

³³ Evans, D., [Teachers' new role: spotting future Neets](#), *Times Educational Supplement Cymru*, 21 January 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

³⁴ *Ibid*, p80

³⁵ *Ibid*

³⁶ [Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training \(NEET\) A response from Cymorth Cymru](#), 14 June 2010 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

based relationship with the organisation that is supporting them through a number of issues'.³⁷

3.5. *Duplication of provision and the NEET 'churn'*

As well as cutting across various policy areas, strategies and provision for young people who are NEET exist at UK, Welsh and local levels. This can also lead to the risk of duplication of provision.

Careers Wales has said that the availability of European Union Structural Funds to support the not in education, employment or training agenda 'has resulted in a proliferation of agencies and projects working with the client group'. It has recommended that the Welsh Government further develop its recent cross-departmental strategic response to Youth Unemployment in partnership with external lead organisations to 'achieve a coordinated joined-up approach, minimising duplication and building on identified good practice'. It suggested that because the landscape of provision for young people not in education, employment or training aged 16 to 18 is complex, there should be a single agency to coordinate support and help ensure that agencies communicate effectively with each other.³⁸

The Enterprise and Learning Committee concluded in a report that 'the 'revolving door' syndrome or 'NEET churn', which refers to when young people move from provider to provider without any forward progression, 'needs to be broken'.³⁹ It said that, while it appeared that there is no shortage of aspiration or strategies for young people in Wales not in education, employment or training, 'there is a need for more effective action on the ground – better partnership working and collaboration between different agencies to ensure a continuum of support, and coordination between different programmes'.⁴⁰

While debate exists as to the form and delivery of strategies relating to young people who are NEET, it is clear that this is a difficult issue to tackle. As Stevie Upton argues in an Institute of Welsh Affairs publication:

the decades of policy targeted in this direction attest to the lack of a simple solution, and the NEETs agenda has come to be seen as a particularly intractable policy 'problem'.⁴¹

Projects can be of key individual importance to young people who are NEET, however. As Stevie Upton says:

³⁷ *Ibid*

³⁸ Enterprise and Learning Committee, *Young people not in education, employment or training*, 15 October 2010 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

³⁹ *Ibid*

⁴⁰ *Ibid*

⁴¹ Institute for Welsh Affairs, *Engaging Wales' Disengaged Youth*, November 2010, p3. Available in Members' Library

...whilst no policy yet has provided a global panacea, existing initiatives often represent a vital lifeline to the individuals they help.⁴²

3.6. *Basic skills and soft skills*

The vital importance of developing basic skills, particularly for long term or so called hard-core NEETs, is frequently highlighted by commentators. In the same IWA publication, Richard Newton of Rathbone Cymru posed the following question:

How would you feel entering a Job Centre or careers office and having to admit to the fact that you couldn't read or write?⁴³

In evidence to the Enterprise and Learning Committee, Fairbridge De Cymru highlighted the need for young people to receive "soft skills" in order to progress successfully within the employment spectrum. It stated:

All too often we see young people being sent to training providers who are not ready to engage at that level of learning. This results in them dropping out and either being lost in the system or sent around the system again to face continual feelings of failure.

Fairbridge De Cymru, Rathbone Cymru and Llamau argued that the current focus on measurable rather than qualitative outcomes was instead biased towards the delivery of accredited qualifications rather than softer skills development, such as changes in attitudes and personal development.⁴⁴

3.7. *Long term support and long term need*

A 2010 report commissioned by Fairbridge brings together findings from three evaluation studies of its work conducted over the past decade. It says:

Results of the analysis show that **long-term improvements** which many young people experience appear to be due to three main things about Fairbridge. The most important factor appears to be the **quality of relationships** that young people experience in Fairbridge, most notably a mutually trusting and respectful relationship with a staff member, but also good relationships with a new peer group. The second most important factor is the **'style' or 'ethos'** of Fairbridge – the way that things are done, such as the combination of fun and discipline. The third most important factor is the **activities on the course**.⁴⁵ [My emphasis].

⁴² *Ibid*

⁴³ *Ibid*, p32

⁴⁴ Enterprise and Learning Committee, *Young people not in education, employment or training*, 15 October 2010 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁴⁵ Knight, B. *Back from the Brink. How Fairbridge transforms the lives of disadvantaged young people*, (Centris), 2010 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

In evidence to the Enterprise and Learning Committee, Francis Crowe of the University of Wales, Newport, calls for a ‘policy focus that recognises greatest long term need’:

There should be a stronger emphasis on the 14-19 strategy of developing links between School, Universities and Employers most particularly in those areas with the lowest levels of participation in higher education and the highest levels of economic inactivity and poor health/ morbidity indicators. **Let’s have a policy focus that recognises greatest long term need.**⁴⁶ [My emphasis].

3.8. *Wider considerations*

The Bevan Foundation has said that ‘it could be said to be a reasonable criticism of education policy – and perhaps other policy areas – since devolution that we have become **policy rich and implementation poor**’. [My emphasis]. It expands:

If a strategy that is intended to improve equity in education outcomes in our schools is to succeed then it is equally important that we develop innovative and effective approaches to implementing the strategy.⁴⁷

Concerns as to the availability of employment for young people also exist. Professor Howard Williamson of Glamorgan University has stated that:

You can upskill young people and keep them in education, but ultimately if you are not creating more jobs you just get qualification inflation.⁴⁸

A report provided to the Enterprise and Learning Committee by the ‘First Choice’ project for young people in Swansea refers to the need for ‘keeping young people mentally and spiritually engaged over what may be a period of unemployment’.⁴⁹

During its visit to the Info-Nation Centre in Swansea, the Enterprise and Learning Committee heard from some young people who had attended the SkillBuild course to improve their soft/basic skills. Although the young people the Committee spoke to felt that it had been a positive experience, there was some disillusionment that there had been no job opportunities available after the 13-week placement had come to an end. Concern about the general lack of apprenticeship opportunities was also expressed by many of the young people and their project workers. ‘Just give us a job’, the Committee was told.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ *Written evidence submitted to the Enterprise and Learning Committee Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)* [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁴⁷ Bevan Foundation, *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Wales*, December 2010 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁴⁸ *Minister for Neets? That's barmy, says expert*, *Times Educational Supplement*, [Online] 22 October 2010. [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁴⁹ First Choice Project / Prosiect Dewis Cyntaf, Substantive Summary of the Final Report, November 2010. First Choice Project / Prosiect Dewis Cyntaf, Substantive Summary of the Final Report, November 2010. The First Choice project is funded from the ‘Reach the Heights’ European Social Fund Programme, distributed by the Arts Council of Wales.

⁵⁰ Enterprise and Learning Committee, *Young people not in education, employment or training*, 15 October 2010 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

4. Strategies and provision

Strategies relevant to young people not in education, employment or training cut across a wide range of disciplines and are developed at a UK, Welsh and local level. Provision can therefore be complex. Set out below are some examples of policies and provision at Welsh Government, UK and local levels, giving a flavour of the complexity of provision.

4.1. Welsh Government

In 2009, the Welsh Government published a strategy and associated action plan for '*Reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training in Wales*',⁵¹ which focused on the 16-18 year age group only. In 2010 the Welsh Government commissioned two groups⁵² to look at the issue of youth engagement and employment in Wales, and in the same year the Wales Employment and Skills Board published a report that looked holistically at youth unemployment.⁵³

The Third Assembly's Enterprise and Learning Committee heard evidence from Careers Wales that following the Welsh Government's 2009 strategy to reduce the proportion of NEETs there had been 'no detailed implementation plan to clarify the responsibilities of each partner and organisation that works with people, who are responsible for supporting them into education and training programmes.' Careers Wales called for greater clarification and clearer direction, not only as regards strategic direction, but also to make it quite clear who is responsible for what.⁵⁴

The Committee report included the recommendation that there should **be one Minister who will lead on the coordination of strategy and action plans, monitor implementation, and be accountable at a national level.**⁵⁵ The Welsh Government responded that the Children, Education and Lifelong Learning Minister is the lead Minister for young people who are not in education, employment or training.

⁵¹ Welsh Government, *Reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training in Wales*, April 2009 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁵² These were: (i) an internal operational group to look at the journey of children and young people aged 0-25 years old who may become economically inactive or disengaged from learning and society and who are subsequently at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training- 'NEET' - in the future⁵², and (ii) an external task and finish group, chaired by Martin Mansfield of Wales TUC, which looked specifically at what more should be done to counter the effects of the recession on young people

⁵³ Wales Employment and Skills Board, *Moving Forward: Foundations for Growth*, May 2010 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁵⁴ Enterprise and Learning Committee, *Young people not in education, employment or training*, 15 October 2010 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁵⁵ *Ibid*

Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan

On 12 January 2011, the Welsh Government published a *Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan 2011-2015*.

Informed by the work of the two commissioned groups and the Wales Employment and Skills Board, the plan ‘outlines the Welsh [...] Government’s approach to preventing children and young people from disengaging from learning and supporting them with entry to the labour market’. Its stated overall aim is the reduction of the number of young people who are, or are at risk of becoming, not in education, employment or training in Wales.⁵⁶

The Plan contains 18 actions points covering a range of issues from 14-19 learning coach provision to the setting up of a Dormant [bank] Accounts Programme⁵⁷ to support young people who are NEET.

In announcing the plan the Minister for Education and Skills, Leighton Andrews AM, said that it ‘brings together one programme of work to strategically drive forward youth engagement and employment in Wales’, and that:

In order to manage this effectively a new Unit has been established to drive policy and lead activity that supports young people into education, training and employment opportunities in Wales. It will ensure coherence in the overall departmental approach to youth engagement and employment.⁵⁸

At a meeting of the Enterprise and Business Committee in July 2011, Leighton Andrews agreed to provide the committee with a full report on all of the 18 actions in the plan.⁵⁹ His statement announcing the plan also made reference to preventative measures:

Preventative measures include the publication of the National Literacy Plan, which I announced last year, the Child Poverty Strategy and existing programmes such as Flying Start and the Foundation Phase.⁶⁰

Set out below is an overview of some of the main Welsh Government policies and programmes relevant to young people who are NEET.

⁵⁶ Welsh Government, Leighton Andrews (Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning), *Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan 2011 – 2015*, Cabinet Written Statement, 12 January 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁵⁷ Welsh Government, *Issuing of Policy Directions for the Dormant Accounts Scheme for Wales*, 28 March 2011

⁵⁸ *Welsh Government Response to the Enterprise and Learning Committee’s recommendations in the report: Young People not in Education, Employment or Training*, 5 January 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁵⁹ RoP [para 55], 13 July 2011, *Enterprise and Business Committee* [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁶⁰ Welsh Government, Leighton Andrews (Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning), *Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan 2011 – 2015*, Cabinet Written Statement, 12 January 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

Learning coaches

Welsh Government guidance on the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure states that:

The period between 14-19 years of age is a time of significant transition. For many young people aspects of their personal life can create barriers to learning and so learner support services can make the difference between realising their learning potential or not doing so. One of the key aspects of 14-19 Learning Pathways is the emphasis placed on the role of learner support services. Many young people will succeed with minimal support, others will need support at key points in their lives and some may need more consistent support over a longer period.⁶¹

As part of the *Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan 2011-2015*, there is to be a pilot extending 14-19 learning coach provision, 'with particular emphasis on supporting young people during their transition from primary to secondary school, with a view to informing best practice'.

Qualifications

At a conference in February 2011, Leighton Andrews raised the following issues in relation to **vocational** qualifications⁶²:

In view of the fact that employers have concerns about some vocational qualifications, should we also narrow the range of vocational qualifications that are taught from 14-19, ensuring there is adequate time for basic skills?

Is it acceptable that we have subjects taught by teachers not qualified in those subjects? Isn't it time that we focused on quality and rigour, rather than an apparent choice which simply doesn't meet the real needs of learners but panders to the **alphabet's soup of qualifications** set up by the private examination boards?⁶³

The Deputy Minister for Skills, Jeff Cuthbert AM, is currently leading a Welsh Government review of qualifications that can be offered to the 14 to 19 age group.

In evidence to the Enterprise and Business Committee in July 2011, Jeff Cuthbert stated that the review will look at all of the qualifications that can be offered to the 14 to 19 age group (not just the vocational ones), and 'will focus on what is valuable, and what we mean by that term is **what is likely to help young people**

⁶¹ Welsh Government, *Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 Learner support services and Learning Pathways*, 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁶² The *Review of Vocational Education - the Wolf Report* reported to the UK Government on vocational education in England in March 2011 and may also be of interest in this context

⁶³ Welsh Government Press Release, *Minister calls for national debate on subjects in Wales*, 14 February 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

to get into employment or self-employment as a result of the courses that they study'.⁶⁴

Skills

Leighton Andrews has said that the successor programme to the Welsh Government Skillbuild initiative will be introduced 'this summer'.⁶⁵

Skillbuild was an all age learning programme, delivered through contracted Work Based Learning providers, for people who [were] not yet ready or able to enter an apprenticeship, or further learning or employment opportunities.

The successor programme will comprise the 'Traineeships' programme for 16-17 year olds, and the 'Steps to Employment' programme for adults. The Traineeships 'will offer enhanced support for young people facing the most severe barriers to employment', and the Steps to Employment programme, for adults, 'maintains a focus on employability and will extend the good practice identified through local employer partnerships'. Leighton Andrews said:

The Steps-to-Employment programme will not only support those furthest away from the Labour market to seek the opportunities they deserve, but also provide support to overcome their specific barriers.

A Welsh Government press release of 28 July 2011 states that the Steps to Employment programme will start 'next week'.⁶⁶

In its *Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy for 2010-15*, the Welsh Government discusses an 'enterprise' or 'employment and work skills' qualification in the context of a successor programme to SkillBuild.⁶⁷

The **Employer Pledge Programme**⁶⁸ forms part of the Welsh Government Basic Skills in the Workplace Project⁶⁹ and is a workforce skills training programme. The Welsh Government anticipates that between April 2010 and 31 December 2015 the Basic Skills in the Workplace programme will engage 1031 employers in the Employer Pledge programme 'to raise awareness of the need for a skilled workforce and to commit to supporting basic skills training for their workforce'.⁷⁰ The scheme is to be delivered in parallel with other skills support available to employers through the Workforce Development Programme.⁷¹

⁶⁴ RoP [para 82], 13 July 2011, [Enterprise and Business Committee](#) [Accessed 2 August 2011]

⁶⁵ [Minister's evidence to Enterprise and Business Scrutiny Committee EBC\(4\)-01-11 Paper 1](#), 13 July 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁶⁶ Welsh Government Press Release, [Flagship jobs scheme piloted by Admiral](#), 28 July 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁶⁷ Welsh Government, [Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy. An Action Plan for Wales 2010-15](#), 2010 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁶⁸ Welsh Government, [The Employer Pledge](#) [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁶⁹ Welsh Government, [Basic Skills in the Workplace](#) [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁷⁰ *Ibid*

⁷¹ *Ibid*

In evidence to an Enterprise and Business Committee meeting in July 2011, Leighton Andrews describes the **Workforce Development Programme** as ‘a principal gateway through which businesses can access solutions to enhance the skills of their workforce’ and comprises ‘flexible selective and discretionary funding’. Currently, discretionary budgets are targeted for (i) Anchor Companies; (ii) Regionally Important Businesses; (iii) Businesses in Priority Sectors; and (iv) growth businesses linked to job creation, and support available to employers is summarised in Annex 1 of the Minister’s evidence to the meeting.⁷²

The Welsh Government has stated in guidance that support under the Workforce Development Programme can include the provision of a Human Resource Development advisor.⁷³

Apprenticeships

Leighton Andrews recently said that:

While we are committed to retaining an all-age Apprenticeship programme, increasingly the emphasis will be on creating opportunities for under-25s. This was an important manifesto commitment.⁷⁴

There are three levels of Apprenticeship available for those aged 16 and over: Foundation Apprenticeships (equivalent to five good GCSE passes); Apprenticeship (equivalent to two A-level passes), and Higher Apprenticeships.

Foundation apprentices work towards work-based learning qualifications such as an NVQ Level 2, Key Skills and, in some cases, a relevant knowledge-based qualification such as a BTEC. At the next level, **Apprentices** work towards work-based learning qualifications such as NVQ Level 3, Key Skills and, in most cases, a relevant knowledge based certificate such as a BTEC. To start this programme, apprentices ‘should ideally have five GCSEs (grade C or above) or have completed a Foundation Apprenticeship’.⁷⁵ Finally, **Higher Apprenticeships** work towards work-based learning qualifications such as NVQ Level 4 and, in some cases, a knowledge-based qualification such as a Foundation degree.⁷⁶

Pathways to Apprenticeships is an intensive, college-based option for young people unprepared for, or unable to find, an Apprenticeship place with an employer. It is a year-long training in preparation for a full apprenticeship for learners aged between 16 and 25, to fast-track them to a level 2 qualification so

⁷² Enterprise and Business Committee 1 EBC(4)-01-11 Paper 1, *Evidence from Minister for Education and Skills and Deputy Minister for Skills*, 13 July 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁷³ Welsh Government, *Skills advice and guidance for Businesses/Organisations in Wales* [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁷⁴ *Minister's evidence to Enterprise and Business Scrutiny Committee EBC(4)-01-11 Paper 1*, 13 July 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁷⁵ Welsh Government, *Levels of Apprenticeship* [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁷⁶ *Ibid*

they can go onto a full apprenticeship.⁷⁷ From 2011/12, Pathways to Apprenticeships will be aligned with the six priority sectors announced in *Economic Renewal: A New Direction*, namely ICT; Energy and environment; Advanced materials and manufacturing; Creative industries; Life sciences, and Financial and professional services.⁷⁸

The Welsh Government states in its *Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan 2011-2015* that it will 'seek to extend the opportunities available for young people to enter apprenticeship programmes, including development of the Pathways to Apprenticeships initiative and Young Recruits programme as part of the apprenticeship offer'. In evidence to the Enterprise and Business Committee in July 2011, Leighton Andrews provided the following figures:

We will continue our commitment to the Pathways to Apprenticeship ['PtA'] programme as a strong route into an apprenticeship, with a special focus on youth engagement and employment. We will deliver approximately 2,000 PtA places in 2011-12 and have secured ESF funding support to continue the programme until 2014.

This year the PtA programme has been extended to ten sectors across Wales and employer demand has been identified regionally by the Sector Skills Councils.⁷⁹

In its Legacy Report, the Third Assembly's Enterprise and Learning Committee recommended that the Pathways to Apprenticeships scheme 'should be monitored to ensure young people who want to serve apprenticeships are provided with the opportunity, and that additional schemes are put in place wherever possible to prevent existing apprenticeships being curtailed'.⁸⁰

Another development is the **Apprenticeship Matching Service**, which was rolled out in 2010 in pilot areas, and in 2011 Leighton Andrews said that:

A key development this year will be the roll-out of the Apprenticeship Matching Service. This web based service will enable potential apprentices to register, search for vacancies and apply for apprenticeships. Employers will be able to register their companies, link to local training providers and post apprenticeship vacancies.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Welsh Government, *Pathways to Apprenticeships* [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁷⁸ Welsh Government, Leighton Andrews (Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning), *Skills for Economic Renewal*, Cabinet Written Statement, 10 March 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011].

⁷⁹ *Minister's evidence to Enterprise and Business Scrutiny Committee EBC(4)-01-11 Paper 1*, 13 July 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁸⁰ Enterprise and Learning Committee, *Young people not in education, employment or training*, 15 October 2010 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁸¹ *Minister's evidence to Enterprise and Business Scrutiny Committee EBC(4)-01-11 Paper 1*, 13 July 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

Young Recruits Programme and Pathway to Work

The Young Recruits programme offers a wage subsidy to employers taking on a 16-24 year old apprentice. The Welsh Government stated in its *Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan 2011-2015* that it will:

Seek to extend the opportunities available for young people to enter apprenticeship programmes, including development of the Pathways to Apprenticeships initiative and Young Recruits programme as part of the apprenticeship offer.

In July 2011, Leighton Andrews said that ‘one thousand [Young Recruits Programme] places will be available this year and [that] this level of activity has been factored into contract allocations’.⁸²

A new ‘Pathway to Work’ for 16-17 year olds is also to be piloted, described by the Welsh Government as follows:

Pilot a new ‘Pathway to Work’ for 16-17 year olds which is not a new programme but the creation of a single, flexible and coherent ‘routeway’ for young people. This route would combine current approaches, enhanced where necessary, into a programme which offers a flexible but integrated and continuous journey towards sustainable employment or other positive outcome. Achievements of the young person will be celebrated at key points along the pathway, including soft skills achievements.⁸³

Work experience and links with employers

The *Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan* says that the Welsh Government will ‘increase opportunities for work experience for those aged 14-24 across Wales, including extending opportunities within the Welsh [...] Government, wider public sector, private and voluntary sector’. It also states that it will introduce the use of social clauses in Welsh Government and wider public sector procurement contracts ‘to create youth employment, work experience and training opportunities wherever practical, including assistance for those in receipt of grants and government support’.⁸⁴

The Third Assembly’s Enterprise and Learning Committee heard evidence that where employers are approached individually and encouraged to provide a young person with an opportunity, there appears to be more success than national marketing campaigns.⁸⁵

⁸² *Ibid*

⁸³ Welsh Government, *Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan 2011-15* [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁸⁴ Welsh Government, Leighton Andrews (Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning), *Skills for Economic Renewal*, Cabinet Written Statement, 10 March 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁸⁵ *Evidence prepared by Careers Wales (CW) for the Inquiry into Young People who are Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET)*, 10 June 2010 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

Welsh Jobs Fund

The Welsh Labour Manifesto 2011 contains a pledge to ‘establish a Welsh Jobs Fund offering employment or training for our young people’.⁸⁶ In July 2011 Leighton Andrews said:

We are considering proposals for the delivery of a new programme to deliver on the Welsh Jobs Fund manifesto pledge which would create job opportunities for 16-24yr olds. Proposals are currently being developed for implementation, with a view to commencing full delivery early in 2012.⁸⁷

University of the Heads of the Valleys Initiative

The University of the Heads of the Valleys Initiative is a strategic partnership between the University of Glamorgan and University of Wales, Newport.⁸⁸ It partners Merthyr Tydfil CBC, Blaenau Gwent CBC, the University of Glamorgan, the University of Wales, Newport, Merthyr College, Coleg Gwent and the Welsh Government, and its stated ambition and purpose is ‘to deliver transformational change and improvement for all-age education across the Heads of the Valleys area’.⁸⁹ The Welsh Government has stated that:

The programme will strive to deliver a pathway through education and training from primary through to HE by engaging with and exciting young people. This is especially important at the ages of 14 to 16 where a clear pathway through to HE must be demonstrated to ensure continued participation in education and training.⁹⁰

The Bevan Foundation refers in a report to the taking into account of the personal and cultural influences upon students in disadvantaged communities and of the importance of place itself. It cites in this context the Challenge programme operating in London, Greater Manchester and the Black Country and the Heads of the Valleys initiative in Wales.⁹¹

The report also refers to the integrating of policy areas and funding streams influencing education and skills (for example Communities First, the Child Poverty Strategy, 21st Century Schools, the Transformation Agenda, Heads of the Valleys Economic Strategy, the University of the Heads of the Valleys Institute), ‘so that

⁸⁶ *Welsh Labour Manifesto 2011. Standing up for Wales*, information from [Welsh Labour](#) 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁸⁷ [Minister's evidence to Enterprise and Business Scrutiny Committee EBC\(4\)-01-11 Paper 1](#), 13 July 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁸⁸ [UHOVI \(Universities Heads of the Valleys Institute\) website](#) [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁸⁹ Welsh Government, *Extension to the contract to develop an education strategy for the Heads of the Valleys Region under the Heads of the Valleys Education Programme*, 9 June 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁹⁰ *Ibid*

⁹¹ Bevan Foundation, *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Wales*, December 2010 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

the greatest amount of support can be given to efforts to improve participation and achievement in education and thereby [...] narrow the gap'.⁹²

4.2. Local initiatives, strategies and provision

Local strategies

In addition to the policies and initiatives at UK (see section 4.3) and Welsh Government level, there are a myriad of more local strategies relating to young people not in education, employment or training. Support provided at the local level can include services provided by Children and Young People's Partnerships; local authority youth services; 'Keeping-in-touch' partnerships; Careers Wales and third sector organisations.

During its visit in June 2010 to the Info-Nation Centre in Swansea, the Enterprise and Learning Committee heard that the City and County of Swansea's NEET Project, under the Local Service Board/ Children and Young People's Programme, aims to support young people aged 16 to 18 into sustained education, employment or training. It has been operating for two years and covers all Swansea secondary schools, units and pupils educated other than at school, and it is delivered through a multi-agency partnership. The project is hosted by Careers Wales West, including the staff employed by the local authority.

The Committee heard that the local authority's strategy for reducing the number of young people aged 16 to 18 not in education, employment or training consisted of a number of initiatives. These included a multi-agency response; a robust evidence base for informing planning and intervention; early identification of those "at risk" of not being in education, employment or training in Year 11; intervention and prevention work; targeted engagement programmes during the Easter and summer holidays; outreach work; and an integrated service delivery approach to providing specialist support and advice.⁹³

An Institute of Welsh Affairs publication contains an article highlighting Torfaen County Borough Council's approach.⁹⁴ Torfaen's focus is on five core elements that are 'key components in reducing young people's risk of acquiring NEET status'. These are (i) Early Years – Flying Start and Sure Start; (ii) Language, literacy and thinking; (iii) Enhancing staff skills at secondary level; (iv) Additional and exceptional support, and (v) the 14-19 Learning Pathways.

⁹² The Bevan Foundation, *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Wales*, December 2010 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁹³ Enterprise and Learning Committee, *Young people not in education, employment or training*, 15 October 2010 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁹⁴ Provis, M., *A local authority perspective on engaging all young people: Torfaen CBC*, published in Institute for Welsh Affairs, *Engaging Wales' Disengaged Youth*, November 2010, p3. Available in Members' Library

A report commissioned by the Local Government Group outlines the work of Worcestershire and Tower Hamlets councils in England, who examined the drivers underpinning NEET status in their areas through consulting with local people. Targeted support and interventions were then designed and implemented based on the outcome of research.⁹⁵

The report also states that ‘a number of local authorities [in England] have used Planning Gain (section 106) to create apprenticeships and employment opportunities’, though not specifically for young people NEET, and cites the Leeds job guarantee model developed in partnership with Tesco that was used to recruit local people for a new Tesco store in Seacroft. Further, according to the report, the City of London Corporation ‘has a five per cent levy that funds employment and training initiatives, many of which are specifically aimed at young people NEET and pre-NEET’.⁹⁶

Projects and initiatives

Many local authority and third sector projects relating to young people who are NEET have benefited from EU Structural Funds funding. Current funding arrangements under cohesion policy (which includes structural funds) end in 2013. Discussions on European funding post-2013 are well underway at the EU and at the Wales level, and the outcome of funding arrangements for Wales post-2013 will be of key interest to stakeholders in this policy field.

Similarly, cuts to local authority budgets and developments within local government leading to greater collaboration and more shared services may also have an impact on the future picture of provision for young people who are NEET.

There are many examples of local initiatives and projects that have benefited from EU Structural Funds. Some examples are as follows.

Pre-VENT is a collaborative project between Bridgend, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil and Torfaen councils that aims to address the underlying causes of disengagement and, through that, the tendency to economic inactivity.⁹⁷ The scheme also collaborates with further education colleges in the area and seeks to raise the aspirations of young people and encourage increased take-up of opportunities in Further and Higher Education.⁹⁸ Provision includes support and training in schools and outreach settings.

⁹⁵ Bramley, G., Phillips, L. and MacLeod, S. (2011). *Hidden talents - exploiting the link between engagement of young people and the economy*, Slough: NFER [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁹⁶ *Ibid*

⁹⁷ Welsh European Funding Office, *EU Projects 2007-2013* and Welsh Government Press Release, *£13m to Pre-VENT NEETS in South Wales*, 20 June 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

⁹⁸ *Ibid*

ENGAGE is a local authority and further education initiative lead by Neath Port Talbot Council in collaboration with Swansea, Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire Councils and FE colleges across the region. The initiative targets 14-16 year-olds facing difficulties such as underachievement or absenteeism, and 16-19 year-olds who are already in college but are at risk of dropping out.⁹⁹

The Genesis Cymru Wales 2 projects aim to increase labour market participation by identifying and providing support to individuals who are furthest away from the labour market.¹⁰⁰ The main focus of the projects is to support female lone parents who are economically inactive, but they also assist a number of other disadvantaged groups who may or may not also fit into this category, for example NEETs, BMEs.¹⁰¹

Reach the Heights – First Footholds aims to strengthen the current position in Wales for young people aged 11-19 who are, or are at risk of becoming NEET.¹⁰² During its visit to the Info-Nation Centre in Swansea, the Enterprise and Learning Committee saw a short film “I’m a NEET” produced by some of the young people there. The film drew on their experiences of trying to rub off the NEET label and combat some common assumptions about NEETs and was funded by Arts Council of Wales through the Reach the Heights programme.

Neetly into Business is a project run by Mid and West Wales Chamber Limited, a not-for-profit organisation in Llanelli, that aims to give young people with a talent or business idea the ability to get started through enterprise skills, an NVQ in self-employment, and mentoring from the local business community. The project is funded through the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) Engagement Gateway project, and is supported by European funding. A WCVA document, footnoted below, brings together some of the views of some of the youngsters involved in the project.¹⁰³

Also supported by European funding is the WCVA’s **Intermediate Labour Market Programme**, which ‘provides a period of paid supported employment and training to help people overcome barriers to work and build confidence’.¹⁰⁴ The programme first originally operated across North and East Wales, and in 2011 Leighton Andrews announced a six month pilot of the programme for 16 and 17 year olds in Communities First Areas in parts of South and West Wales.¹⁰⁵ At the

⁹⁹ Welsh Government Press Release, [£32m funding boost will ‘ENGAGE’ young people](#), 12 November 2009 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

¹⁰⁰ Welsh Government, [Genesis Cymru Wales 2](#) [Accessed 16 August 2011]

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, and Welsh European Funding Office, [EU Projects 2007-2013](#) [Accessed 16 August 2011]

¹⁰² [ESF Convergence Programme 2007- 2013 Approved Projects: List of EU Beneficiaries as at 02/06/2011](#) [Accessed 16 August 2011]

¹⁰³ Wales Council for Voluntary Actions, [Changing lives. How European funding is helping Wales’ third sector change lives](#), May 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁵ Welsh Government Press Release, [Almost £1 million to help 16-17 year-olds into work](#), 10 February 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

launch of the pilot scheme, stakeholders participated in workshop discussions on the scheme. Commentary from delegates was summarised in a Welsh Government document, an extract of which is as follows:

Ensuring other provision is aligned: there may be a lack of communication with other schemes across Wales to support young people which could lead to duplication or a situation whereby complementary schemes may not align effectively to the ILM. Similarly, some **delegates commented on the importance of ensuring the new vacancy matching pilots are linked closely with the development of the ILM.**¹⁰⁶ [My emphasis].

The **Prince's Trust Community Impact Award** recognises the positive contribution a group of young people make to their local community and it was recently awarded to Buzz Bikes – an outdoor cycling club founded by seven boys aged 15 and 16 and is designed to help tackle anti-social behaviour in Blaina, Blaenau Gwent.¹⁰⁷

There are a large number of organisations that provide support at the local level for young people not in education, employment or training. During its inquiry, the Enterprise and Learning Committee heard evidence from Rathbone Cymru, Fairbridge de Cymru and the Prince's Trust, who outlined some of their activity.¹⁰⁸

Collaboration and duplication of provision

A criticism of local level provision for young people who are NEET is that duplication exists and that collaboration between agencies can be lacking, particularly in relation to initiatives supported by European funding. The 'revolving door' syndrome or NEET 'churn', which refers to when young people move between providers, moving into and out of NEET status, but without really benefiting in the long term, is also cited in this context.

In evidence to the Enterprise and Learning Committee, Prince's Trust Cymru referred to the lack of any strategic analysis of need on a geographical basis so that when organisations submitted funding bids – "independently and in competition with each other" – there was "often a plethora of similar provision funded for NEETs in the same area with delivery taking place at the same time." It cited a recent experience in Pembrokeshire where an Arts Council of Wales Reach the Heights programme for young people not in education, employment or training had surplus places. The Welsh Local Government Association commented that projects funded under the European Structural Fund Convergence Programme are causing particular concern for local authorities. The WLGA argued that the

¹⁰⁶ Welsh Government, [Intermediate Labour Market Launch Event](#) [Accessed 16 August 2011]

¹⁰⁷ Prince's Trust, [Buzz Bikes](#) [Accessed 16 August 2011]

¹⁰⁸ Enterprise and Learning Committee, [Young people not in education, employment or training](#), 15 October 2010 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

Reaching the Heights projects, for example, may not fit strategically with Children and Young People's Partnerships Plans and priorities, or they may even duplicate existing services.

In its report, the Enterprise and Learning Committee noted the 'body of concern' that local level agencies should be working more collaboratively and in a more coordinated way to achieve the best outcomes for young people not in education, employment or training.¹⁰⁹ The report recommended that Welsh Ministers identify **at the local level a lead agency** for young people not in education, employment or training, and that this agency should coordinate partnerships, identify responsibilities, manage the journey for young people from one stage to the next, and monitor performance.¹¹⁰

The Welsh Government responded that:

The Welsh [...] Government fully supports the direction of this recommendation, which aligns with the Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan. The importance of effective partnerships, both at national and local level, has been highlighted very strongly throughout this process. **A multi-agency approach with stronger collaborative working to ensure young people do not fall through the net, particularly at transition points, is one of the key areas the Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan will address.** Clarity of roles, robust tracking systems and information sharing and monitoring of performance all form a key part of this. **The Children and Young People's Partnerships are one of the vehicles for co-ordinating local delivery against the Welsh [...] Government policy, and its success will be evidenced over time by improved outcomes for young people in Wales.**¹¹¹ [My emphasis].

In its *Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan 2011*, the Welsh Government said that it will:

Carry out a **review of existing funding and provision for young people who are NEET from across Wales, including European Social Fund programmes, to inform and introduce a revised process for the approval of the youth engagement and employment projects** ensuring that resources and activities meet need, are not duplicated and offer the best possible service to the young person.¹¹² [My emphasis].

4.3. UK level policies

In February 2010 Leighton Andrews launched the Labour Market Framework with the UK Secretary for Work and Pensions at that time. This focused on reducing the number of people who are unemployed or not economically active; raising the earnings of people who are in work; and improving services for employers.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*

¹¹¹ *Welsh Government Response to the Enterprise and Learning Committee's recommendations in the report: Young People not in Education, Employment or Training*, 5 January 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

¹¹² Welsh Government, *Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan 2011-15* [Accessed 16 August 2011]

In April 2010 the Minister announced a Joint Operational Plan with the Department for Work and Pensions formalising arrangements for the planning and delivery of policy and programmes where there is a joint responsibility. A **Joint Employment Delivery Board** would drive forward and monitor the operational plan and report progress to Ministers on an annual basis. The Welsh Government said that:

We want to focus actions on the delivery of programmes to tackle youth unemployment and long-term unemployment. We want to enable all disadvantaged groups to enter the labour market through diversity of programme delivery; we want to provide the skilled workforce that employers need; and we want to maximise opportunities created through regeneration.¹¹³

The Welsh Government said in its *Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan* that it would ensure that Government initiatives enhance but do not duplicate programmes introduced by DWP welfare reforms. Leighton Andrews has recently said that the Joint Employment Delivery Board will bring forward proposals **later this year** to develop the necessary cross-agency relationships and protocols to deliver coordinated support for businesses. He also stated:

The Welsh Government has articulated our disappointment at the proposals contained within the UK Coalition's Welfare Reform Agenda. Over recent months I have been in regular dialogue with Secretary of State for the Department of Work and Pensions, and his Ministerial team, to argue for a more progressive approach to dealing with those most likely to be disadvantaged. I was particularly disappointed to learn of the UK Coalition Government's decision to scrap the **Future Jobs Fund**, a programme that partners from all over Wales have supported.¹¹⁴

Welfare to work programmes

The UK Government coalition agreement stated it would 'end existing welfare to work programmes and create a single welfare to work programme to help all unemployed people get back to work'.¹¹⁵ In evidence to the Enterprise and Learning Committee, the Department for Work and Pensions and JobCentre Plus said that the UK Government's welfare reform will include the creation of a **Work Programme** that offers personalised help for all benefit claimants who are out of work, **including young people**.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Welsh Government, Leighton Andrews (Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning), *Joint Operational Plan for Wales*, Cabinet Written Statement, 27 April 2010 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

¹¹⁴ The Future Jobs Fund supported "the creation of jobs for long-term unemployed young people and others who face significant disadvantage in the labour market," and formed part of the Young Person's Guarantee (a guaranteed offer of a job, training or work experience for 18-24 year olds after six months' unemployment). The Fund was closed to any further bids as a result of the Government's announcement on efficiency savings in May 2010. See Department for Work and Pensions, *Future Jobs Fund*, 16 May 2011 and *Future Jobs Fund*, information from Welsh Government website [Accessed 16 August 2011]

¹¹⁵ HM Government, *The Coalition: our programme for government*, 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

¹¹⁶ *Evidence submitted by Department for Work and Pensions and JobCentre Plus to inquiry into Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training in Wales*, National Assembly for Wales website [Accessed 16 August 2011]

The **Work Programme** will replace existing welfare to work programmes such as the Future Jobs Fund, and is part of the 'Get Britain Working' programme. The Work Programme roll-out began in June 2011.¹¹⁷

Measures under the 'Get Britain Working' scheme of potential relevance to young people who are NEET in Wales include the New Enterprise Allowance, Work Clubs, Work Experience and Service Academies (to offer sector-specific pre-employment training and work placements) and Work Together (which relates to volunteering).

In its Legacy Report, the Enterprise and Learning Committee notes that it 'was concerned about the future impact of the UK Government's new Work Programme on unemployed young people in Wales, particularly the threat to the pastoral role of Department for Work and Pensions frontline staff'. It recommended that:

Future committees should encourage the Welsh Government to work closely with the UK's Department for Work and Pensions and should monitor the impact of the UK Government's new Work Programme, particularly in how it affects the pastoral care that is provided for young unemployed people in Wales.¹¹⁸

5. Some conclusions

There is both an individual cost and a cost to society of young people being NEET.

Links exist between poverty and low educational attainment, and risk factors for young people becoming NEET include unstable home environments, teenage motherhood and poor levels of literacy. The importance of prevention and early intervention is often highlighted in relation to the 'NEET' debate.

Strategies pertaining to young people who are NEET cross-cut many policy areas and are developed at UK, Welsh and local levels. The picture of provision is complex. Relevant policies include economic development, mental health, education, training and skills, work benefits, health and well-being and commentators often cite the importance of adopting an integrated approach to provision.

There is also, some say, a need for realism. A report provided to the Enterprise and Learning Committee by the 'First Choice' project for young people in Swansea discusses the need for 'keeping young people mentally and spiritually engaged over what may be a period of unemployment'.¹¹⁹ In an Institute of Welsh Affairs

¹¹⁷ Department for Work and Pensions press release, *Work Programme provides tailored support as latest figures show people are being found fit for work*, 26 July 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011] For some background information on the Welfare to Work programmes, see Harari, D. House of Commons Library Standard Note SN/EP/5627 *Welfare to Work Programmes: An overview*, December 2010 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

¹¹⁸ Enterprise and Learning Committee, *Legacy Report*, March 2011 [Accessed 16 August 2011]

¹¹⁹ First Choice Project / Prosiect Dewis Cyntaf, Substantive Summary of the Final Report, November 2010. The First Choice project is funded from the 'Reach the Heights' European Social Fund Programme, distributed by the Arts Council of Wales.

report on youth engagement, Howard Williamson, Professor of European Youth Policy at the University of Glamorgan, poses the following questions:

It is a very difficult thing to say but, having mooted the point already, there is an argument that, in the aspirational 'knowledge-based economy' that is the Europe of the future, the young people who are 'NEET' will struggle to find any place in private (and perhaps even public) sector arrangements. The 'fit' referred to above may rarely be achievable. **Should we now bite this awful bullet and think much harder about how we might give those who are 'NEET' (or at risk of it) some alternative hope for their futures through what might be called, drawing on the substance misuse field, a 'harm reduction' model (or public works, social activity and subsidised personal enterprise)?** It may ultimately be better than trying to fob them off with poor and temporary work and training experience that may be more of a revolving door than a clear point of entry into permanent and sustainable employment.¹²⁰ [My emphasis].

5.1. *Looking forward*

The following issues may have an impact on the future picture of provision for young people not in education, employment or training: changes to local authority budgets; third sector funding; availability of lottery funding for local projects; decisions on future rounds of EU Structural Funding and developments within local government that could mean greater collaboration between local authorities, including more shared services.

Other particular challenges for policy makers and providers include: the availability of employment; improved provision of basic skills training; the development of vocational skills and qualifications (including opportunities relating to entrepreneurship); developing community approaches to learning and engagement; eliminating duplication of provision; costs of higher education and other learning; and the provision of effective personal support and mentoring. Concerns around higher education costs may also lead to an increase in interest in apprenticeships and 'on the job training',¹²¹ and the outcome of the Welsh Government qualifications review will also be of interest in this context.¹²²

While debate exists as to the form strategies should take and how they should best be implemented, however, specific projects represent a 'vital lifeline'¹²³ to individuals who are NEET.

¹²⁰ Williamson, H., *Delivering a 'NEET' solution: an essay on an apparently intractable problem*, published in Institute for Welsh Affairs, *Engaging Wales' Disengaged Youth*, November 2010, p3 Available in Members' Library

¹²¹ [Rising uni fees 'may mean more apprentices in Wales](#), BBC news [Online] 29 January 2011. [Accessed 16 August 2011]

¹²² The Education and Skills Act 2008 increased the minimum age at which young people in England can leave learning requiring them to continue in education or training to the age of 17 from 2013 and to 18 from 2015

¹²³ Institute for Welsh Affairs, *Engaging Wales' Disengaged Youth*, November 2010, p3 Available in Members' Library

In an article published by the IWA, Frank Callus (Strategic Manager, Education, Training and Skills, Heads of the Valleys Programme) makes the following thought-provoking comment:

Low educational attainment, inadequate housing, poor health and economic inactivity are **not distinct outcomes of specific life-choices but the inevitable result of multiple deprivation. The problems are complex and so are not likely to be resolved by simplistic solutions.**¹²⁴

¹²⁴ Callus, F. *Pre-VENT: an education initiative in the Heads of the Valleys*, published in Institute for Welsh Affairs, *Engaging Wales' Disengaged Youth*, November 2010. Available in Members' Library