

Enterprise and Learning Committee

EL(3) 13-10 (p1) : 10 June 2010

Evidence prepared by Careers Wales (CW) for the Inquiry into Young People who are Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET)

Purpose

to examine the impact of strategies on people aged 16-24 who are not in education, employment or training in Wales.

Background - Young People who are not in education, employment or training

There is a wealth of research readily available about the characteristics, make up and needs of young people who are NEET. The implications of not addressing this issue are serious and costly to both the individuals concerned and to the economy. It is accepted that young people who have been NEET are on average more prone to unemployment in later life, have lower incomes and there are even implications in term of wellbeing and health. In considering the issue in relation to the 16-24 age group it is important to look at their experience from a much younger age and how we identify those who are in danger of becoming NEET.

Trends in terms of the number of young people NEET at 16 are provided in the Careers Wales Destination Survey. The 2009 survey shows there was a reduction in the number of young people becoming NEET at 16 from 6.8% in 2005 to 5.7% in 2009 with more young people remaining in full time education. However the March 2010 tracking of the same group shows an increase in young people who are NEET as a result of young people dropping out of provision. The picture is complicated as the cohort of young people, both 16 and 17 year olds, is continually changing and evolving. Counting and tracking this group is complex.

Background on the role of Careers Wales (CW)

Careers Wales consists of six careers companies contracted by the Welsh Assembly Government to provide specified careers related support for the people of Wales. Services include the provision of in depth careers guidance, careers information and advice to clients of all ages including via the CW website www.careerswales.com, and supporting and developing education business partnerships. CW also provides a range of targeted services, listed below, which are funded via the core contract to young people who are unemployed (or NEET) and believes it plays a key role in this agenda which could be further strengthened.

Education Gateway services - a programme for pre 16 young people including mentoring support with school non attenders and those in danger of disengaging in KS4 with transition support at 16.

Careers Guidance services including careers guidance interviews to help young people make well informed decisions and support to help them consider the next step

Referral and Placing Services /Government Youth Guarantee

CW manages a comprehensive register of unemployed 16-18 year olds. Over 11,000 young people aged 16-18 registered as unemployed with Careers Wales in 2009-10 We proactively work to place young people and are the sole endorsing agency for the government training programme "Skillbuild". We placed 67% of leavers from our register into Education/Training and Employment (ETE) in 2009-10. 31% were identified as having additional support needs and were referred to Youth Gateway. In total we placed 8636 young people into Skillbuild, 323 into mainstream training and 960 into employment in 2009-10.

Youth Gateway offers additional support to NEET young people through a programme of initial assessment, motivation and ongoing mentoring support. In 2008-9 85% of clients surveyed achieved positive outcomes within four months of entering Youth Gateway provision. (In 2007 the figure was 79% and in 2008 it was 83%)

Additional services are funded from a variety of other sources including 14-19 Learning Networks and CYPPs. (annex 1 contains case studies)

Summary and Conclusions -

A . Whether Welsh Government strategies are effectively delivering outcomes for young people not in education, employment or training;

1. National Strategy

1.1 Since the publication of the DSTWFW Strategy in 2009 progress has been patchy in terms of taking action and establishing a clear way forward for Wales although the pace appears to be quickening now with Task and Finish groups reporting to the Minister. The above strategy articulated a number of the key issues and ways forward in terms of "The right systems, the right support and the right provision." C W and other partner agencies have presented their views on priorities for action on a number of occasions. There is an urgent need to take account of and build on existing good practice. The lack of strategy combined with availability of ESF funding has led to an increasing amount of duplication and uneven provision across Wales.

1.2 The current situation means that there are at least 22 different and uncoordinated responses to the NEET agenda with no nationally agreed accountability, performance indicators and improvement targets. The CYPPs and the 14-19 Networks in each local authority have budgets, which they can allocate to supporting the NEET agenda as they see fit, and separate planning mechanisms

1.3 Many stakeholders seek more leadership and direction from the WAG. Outcomes for young people are being achieved by individual organisations who work very hard to do this. The lack at both national and local level of a joined up strategy and policy, coordination and planning means that resources are not being maximised. It sometimes appears that various WAG departments are unclear about how initiatives across the Welsh Assembly Government relate to each other.

It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government further develops the 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.

2. Continuum of support

2.1 Once a young person is identified as being at risk of becoming NEET, a continuum of support through the various transition points in education and beyond must be established. The young person should be placed at the centre and their individual needs recognised. The landscape of provision and support for young people NEET aged 16-18 is complex. They require ongoing personalised and tailored support including advocacy signposting and referral based on a full understanding of the barriers they face ranging from a chaotic lifestyle, not engaging in learning resulting in poor basic skills to learning difficulties and disabilities. A single agency needs to coordinate their support and help ensure that agencies communicate effectively with each other about these young people. A coordinated approach to engaging young people who are not in touch is needed which ensures engagement with Careers Wales for support to enter learning or employment.

It is recommended that attention is paid to the whole client journey and addressing barriers as they arise and having a clearly identified lead agency at each stage. The various initiatives in place funded by ESF convergence should link up better with those offered by statutory agencies with effective support offered to make appropriate career decisions.

3. Learning Provision and Employment

3.1 The WAG have made progress in considering the work based learning provision map in consultation with Careers Wales. The programmes replacing Skillbuild in 2011 will deliver more to engage young people who need entry level provision. Currently there is not always progression for learners onto Apprenticeship programmes. Current apprenticeship programmes focussing on Level 3 candidates offer limited support for young people NEET. Progress has begun in terms of Further Education Institutions providing a more flexible offer with start dates throughout the year and provision at pre entry level. This needs to become common practice. The way in which provision is commissioned does not always result in meeting local needs of learners or the economy. The recession has meant that employment opportunities for this group are even more limited. 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.

It is recommended that developments in the provision of learning continue to take into account the views of stakeholders and offer progression to learners of all abilities.

4. Careers Wales and the NEET agenda

4.1 Effective partnership working and collaboration between different agencies is fundamental in order to ensure that there is a continuum of support for this group of young people. Data on young people needs to be collected, shared and used by different agencies and the Welsh Assembly Government.

4.2 There has been much discussion about developing a new national database of young people who are NEET. However Careers Wales already holds the full range of personal data on all young people in Wales from at least Year 9 onwards including data relating to the services CW delivers, clients' career aspirations, details of previous learning and work, qualifications etc and what they are doing now. We have good arrangements in place with many providers to obtain data on learners, early leavers etc. CW already provides WAG with much data and is piloting sharing data with partner organisations.

4.3 Careers Wales' work with young people NEET has been recognised by Estyn in recent reports and acknowledged by WAG in its 2008 consultation document which suggested that Careers Wales should be given lead role with NEETS and later in 2009 when it was suggested we should have a "stronger role". There is at present still no decision from WAG about this. The Review of Careers Services in Wales is now near completion. The recommendations have been presented to the minister. Although the report is not yet in the public domain, it is hoped that it will reflect the recommendations below.

4.4 It is frustrating that the significant amount of knowledge and experience that Careers Wales has about this issue has not always been fully exploited by WAG and there appears to be some degree of duplication in recent external research it has commissioned. We were disappointed not to be represented on the recently convened Youth Unemployment Task Group chaired by Martin Mansfield.

It is recommended that WAG :

Confirm CW as having the lead role in coordinating the client journey , managing a continuum of tailored support for learners at 16-18 and coordinating local partnership strategies to address NEET issues.

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.

B. Engagement between the Welsh Assembly Government and the Department for Work and Pensions and Job Centre Plus (JCP) in Wales to ensure a coherent policy

1. Effective and appropriate development of DWP and JCP policy in Wales is challenging as it has often been developed in England where the policy and provision landscape is different. It should not be transferred to Wales without careful consideration. A recent example of this is an initiative developed by JCP to work with 16/17 year olds. This duplicates contractual work undertaken by CW on behalf of the WAG. Discussions are now in place to ensure a "made in Wales" solution is developed which takes into account the work done by Careers Wales and which will provide "added value". Both parties have agreed to work together to improve the transition at 18 from one service to another.

2. JCP and CW work together at national and local levels. There is a joint Steering group on the Careers Ladder model. Integrated Employment and Skills (IES) joint pilots between CW and JCP include the 18 - 25 group. There is effective collaboration between staff and customers are receiving additional support from CW via the Skills Health Check tool and process.

3. There has been discussion by WAG and others about enhancing the way in which young people are made aware of vacancies. The "referral and placing service" offered by Careers Wales for 16-18 year olds and the work that we are doing to develop the Apprenticeship Matching Service needs to be taken into account when considering improvements.

It is recommended that in order to avoid duplication in the area of support to young people who are NEET, Careers Wales is invited to join the Joint Operational Group recently set up between WAG, JCP and DWP.

C. Addressing the needs of, those young people at highest risk of becoming NEET and specific 'at-risk' groups

1. Research undertaken on behalf of Careers Wales by Cordis Bright in 2007 concluded that young people NEET are not a homogenous group but are more likely than the general cohort to be for example male, have history of non attending, have a "looked after" status, history of exclusions, contact with the Youth Offending Services etc. Development of Careers Wales' capacity in terms of data management would enable more detailed analysis of those entering the NEET cohort across Wales.

2. There can be duplication in terms of support for these groups. More clarity in terms of roles would prevent mixed messages being received by clients, better use of resources and allow organisations to work to their strengths.

3. Careers Wales works effectively with many partner organisations to identify these clients and to address their needs. Examples of current good practice include secondments of Careers Advisers to the Youth Justice Service in North Wales and contracted provision to Youth Justice Services in Cardiff and the Vale, providing access to the Careers Wales MIS systems and intensive careers related support to mentor clients into sustainable outcomes. Another example is the regular liaison that takes place between CW and local authority "Looked after Children (LAC) "staff with case conferences about individual LAC and those leaving care to agree next steps. (ANNEX 1 DEMONSTRATES HOW CW DELIVERS IN PARTNERSHIP)

It is recommended that there are clear national guidelines to allow a consistent approach to identification of those at risk of becoming NEET and published guidelines about the responsibilities of key agencies.

D. The status of arrangements/negotiations for current/future European Structural funding for NEET policy delivery in Wales

1. The availability of European Funding through Convergence Priority 1 provides a genuine opportunity to invest in sustainable provision that is required to identify, assess and support young people. However, ESF outcome measures do not always equate with WAG objectives. "Engagement" of a young person in funded provision does not equate with progression into the labour market and sustaining an outcome. The availability of ESF funding to support the NEET agenda has resulted in a proliferation of agencies and projects working with the client group. One area where anecdotally this appears to be particularly pronounced is the offer of provision to schools, for young people who are in mainstream education and at risk of becoming NEET. One head teacher reported that she had had more than 5 approaches from agencies offering courses to pupils in Key Stage 4 to improve motivation, provide outdoor pursuits, etc. Often these courses do not include ongoing mentoring and support to individuals. In some areas ESF funding is trying to bring a partnership approach to the work.

2. Once these projects have been approved there appears to be little requirement on them to liaise locally to learn what provision is required or to access young people who may benefit from support. Careers Wales has had a Priority 1 ESF bid logged with WEFO for over 2 years. In the meantime many other bids have been approved some of which duplicate core services offered by Careers Wales.

It is recommended that the criteria used to approve ESF Priority 1 Convergence bids by WEFO are reviewed and that there is more emphasis on a coordinated approach to achieving the emerging policy objectives of the Welsh Assembly Government and a more detailed scrutiny of duplication.

E. The effectiveness of agency collaboration/partnership working in addressing NEET issues in Wales and whether there is duplication of effort in this area;

1. Organisations on a local level have in many cases forged effective partnerships to deliver provision, support the client etc. However, there is also duplication particularly in terms of support to young people who are NEET, often as a result of ESF project based funding. In some areas there are effective NEET strategy groups which are aiming to put a regional strategy together that identifies the key areas of responsibility of each organisation and monitors a plan.

2. Wrexham, where reduction of young people NEET was a strategic priority provides a good example of partners working together. A significant reduction in the number of young people NEET at 16 was achieved showing a decrease from 143 in 2008 to 72 in 2009. Initiatives at operational level included the 14-19 Network / FE College offering more appropriate provision aimed at engaging them more effectively in learning, increased and personalised support from CW via a named Youth Gateway adviser, stronger / closer links with work based learning providers.

3. The CYPPs and the 14-19 Networks both have an interest in addressing the NEET agenda. The degree of involvement varies across Wales. There is a degree of duplication in terms of these networks which raises the question about whether in the interests of efficiency and clarity the continuing separate existence of both is tenable in the future.

It is recommended that strategic partnerships/ fora focussed on the NEET agenda should be rolled out at a national and regional level, chaired and coordinated by the lead organisations. Regional strategies should be based on a national strategy developed in partnership by WAG and external agencies.

F. The implications of the current Welsh Assembly Government Review of Careers Services in Wales on implementation of NEETs policies

1. Please see paragraph 4.3 in Section A for further information.

Annex 1: Case Studies and Good Practice Examples

Case Study - Andrew was referred to CW by the **Looked after Children team**. He attended a CW Youth Gateway programme. His family were in London and although confident he lacked support and contact with his sister was not in his best interests. Following careers guidance and mentoring from the Youth Gateway Adviser it was agreed that he would apply for Skillbuild. He did this with support and he was found an eight week placement in a garage. This then gave him the confidence to apply for college. He is now living independently and attending a full time course at college.

Case Study - Collaboration between the LEA and Careers Wales about **children not attending mainstream schools**. Iolo had not attended full time education since Year 9 as a result of an accident. Having recovered from his injuries he still complained of a pain in his knee. He was referred by the LEA to Children Mental Health Service (CAMHS). He would not leave the house and was receiving home tuition. He was chosen to be part of an initiative funded by the 14-19 Learning Network providing Transition Support Workers from Careers Wales. The first achievement was to go for walks with his worker and "chat". This concentrated support over 12 months has not yet led to an outcome and is ongoing. However Iolo has with his workers support, now attended a taster morning at a local college with a view to attending a prevocational course.

Case Study - NC was referred to the **Careers Wales NEET Learning Coach Programme by his YOS worker**. The barriers he faced were complex and multiple. He had not attended school for the last 6 years of statutory education. His confidence was at an all time low, he had a drink problem, was homeless, had poor basic and social skills and suffered from a history of neglect. The Learning Coach referred NC to a personal development course funded by the programme and then onto another Learning Coach programme, the Allsorts Project, which focused on his individual needs and built a programme around him. He now feels ready to participate in wider training and support offered by Youth Gateway. Following this his intention is to move into mainstream training with the continued support of his Learning Coach and Youth Gateway Adviser.

Good Practice Partnerships with the Local Authority to provide **traveller communities** with access to careers guidance and support. In South West Wales Careers Wales, the education welfare officer and the schools work effectively to overcome cultural barriers. They actively engage with parents and young people who now attend school and have progressed to work based learning and employment. All clients have made a successful and sustained transition.

Good Practice Engagement of clients from certain **ethnic minority groups**. Careers Wales run an outreach programme targeting specific communities. e.g the Somali community in South East Wales. The Youth Gateway programme is taken to their community and then the participants are encouraged to move out of their community and actively engage in employment education or training

Good practice: Transition Support. In North West Wales, Careers Advisers work with an identified group of young people who were identified in Year 11 as having a potential of becoming NEET. The young people are offered additional support during the period running up to leaving year 11, throughout the "transition period" and into their next step. The additional support they receive from the project is offered to help motivate and give them the confidence to progress into either education, work or training after year 11. At the end of the first year 89% young people were in positive outcomes. (External Funding)

Good practice Building on the recommendations of the Cordis Bright Research 2007 and 2009 Careers Wales run a **NEET Learning Coach** programme in partnership with the Youth Service in SE Wales. The programme seeks to reengage hard to reach young people

aged 16-18 into positive learning pathways by providing intensive personal support and coordinating individually tailored and funded, flexible provision that addresses a wide range of issues which may be barriers to moving forward. Provision has been developed in the community at a pre-entry level through a network of providers including WBL, voluntary and charitable organizations and colleges. It focuses on developing employability skills, basic skills, independence, motivation and self respect supported by mentoring from Learning Coaches.