

# Enterprise and Learning Committee

EL(3) 13-10 (p5) : 10 June 2010

## National Assembly for Wales - Enterprise and Learning Committee Inquiry into Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training in Wales

### Background

1. Prince's Trust Cymru (PTC) has been asked to submit comments to the National Assembly for Wales' Enterprise and Learning Committee inquiry into Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs).

2. The Prince's Trust is a UK national charity whose mission is 'to help disadvantaged young people in the UK to change their lives and get into employment, education or training.' PTC seeks to operate in collaborations and partnerships across the voluntary and public sectors to deliver effective support to NEETs with our or target groups. These are young people at risk of, or having been in the criminal justice system, care leavers, unemployed and educational underachievers.

### PTC response to the issues being considered by the Committee

PTC has the following comments on the Committee areas of interest:

Issue 1 - Do WAG strategies effectively deliver outcomes for NEETs?

3. There is evidence of effective programmes and well meaning initiatives that have made some positive impression on the NEETs problem. However, in our view the programmes and initiatives are numerous, overlapping and somewhat uncoordinated. There is a strategic view in WAG which is well articulated at Ministerial and senior official level but too few resources to ensure programmes and initiatives are linked and tailored to contribute to the strategy.

4. For example, when opportunities to bid for funding are announced all providers, public, private and third sector, work independently and in competition with each other to submit bids. There doesn't seem to be any analysis of training need on a geographical basis which influences the scoring mechanism and consequently there is often a plethora of similar provision funded for NEETs in the same area with delivery taking place at the same time. A recent experience in Pembrokeshire with Arts Council Reach the Heights funding, meant there weren't enough NEET young people to fill all the provision.

5. Whilst competitive tendering is a valid procurement route, there should be a compulsion for bidders to work together and form meaningful collaborations or partnerships. Perhaps the approach being taken to the replacement for Skillbuild, which focuses on partnership working, could be adopted for other funding streams? Furthermore, competitive tendering should be restricted to one level, only if we are to create a collaborative environment.

Issue 2 - Does WAG engagement with DWP and JCP ensure a coherent policy response to NEETs?

6. This again is an area where the building blocks are in place but the mortar between the bricks is missing.

7. Future Jobs Fund is a good example of a sound initiative that could have contributed to sustainable employment if approached on a broader and more strategic front. For example, it was recognised within WAG that a pre Future Jobs Fund programme would greatly enhance the chance of success for young people on the Future Jobs Fund. However, funding could not be made available to support that approach.

8. Also, JCP frontline staff are under considerable pressure and they have many, many training opportunities to consider when deciding on the best way forward for a young person. We are not convinced that the referral process is as good as it could be and young people are missing opportunities to be dealt with by the appropriate agency (including voluntary and state provision).

9. Programmes such as the Young Persons Guarantee are well meaning but are more words than effect due to the lack of available jobs and the difficulty for NEETs to realistically access them.

10. This is harder to suggest a solution for as it is unlikely that more front line resources will be allocated to Job Centres. Recognition of the importance of, and work involved in, keeping JCP up to date with provision could be better reflected in funding bids.

Issue 3 - To what extent is WAG economic development and employment strategy addressing NEETs?

11. We are not able to comment on this as we are unsighted on much of the renewal programme. However, the Director of PTC, Rick Libbey, has been interviewed and expressed some ideas on including young people in the approach. For instance, incentivising the private sector to include a certain number of 'starter jobs' to help young people get into work.

Issue 4 - What specific action is WAG taking for young people at high risk of becoming NEET and specific at risk groups?

12. A range of programmes exist but, as in response to the first issue, they are not as well coordinated as they could be.

Issue 5 - The status of ESF for NEETS policy delivery?

13. The availability of ESF is perhaps the way in which we, in Wales, can navigate through tough public sector financial constraints. However, the process of bidding is complex and time consuming, as outlined in response to the first issue.

Issue 6 - The effectiveness of collaboration / partnership working in addressing NEETs?

14. This is an area that needs significant improvement as outlined in response to the first issue.

Issue 7 - The implications of WAG Review of Careers Services on NEETs policies

15. We know little about this except that Careers Wales will become a single entity rather than 6 separate ones.

16. The issues we face in working with Careers Wales mirror those outlined in the response to the second issue.