



PtP Collaborative approaches to reducing NEETS

Outbreak paper from 08 July 2010 held at the Directory of Social Change, London.

Introduction

With the end of the recession failing to stop the rise in the number of 16-24 year olds not in employment, education or training (NEET), the problem of young people who are NEET has risen up the political agenda. With local funding for worklessness projects under threat, and wider cuts to public spending inevitable, we need to find ways of working better to deliver enhanced outcomes at reduced costs. The PtP event; Collaborative approaches to reducing NEETs brought together partners from local authorities, the voluntary sector and members from the private sector and charitable organisations to share their learning, successes and challenges in tackling this crucial issue, to avert the possibility of a 'lost generation' where large numbers fail to get a first foot on the ladder into sustainable employment.

The seminar looked at some successful and innovative approaches being adopted across the South East and it provided delegates with an opportunity to network with colleagues, and to work in groups to address NEET issues arising in their areas.

Keynote speakers from the day

David Waggett from Young People's learning Agencies (YPLA) was the first speaker of the day who looked at the overall NEET challenge in the South East. David examined how the NEETs agenda will still be relevant but that now the responsibility has shifted towards the local authority rather than the quangos as we have seen in the past. He demonstrated that the 'noughties' had been a successful period for young people and that when the recession hit more young people went into education and training, this has been a really positive outcome that is often over looked.

David gave the delegates a wide range of statistical data that showed out of 19 local authorities in the south east 12 have a higher proportion of NEETs than the national average. Out of all the areas, Slough, Buckinghamshire and Surrey had the lowest proportion of NEETs and Portsmouth and East Sussex had the highest. It was discussed that even though the South East is a very affluent area and even though participation in employment and training has improved the level is still below average.

Peter Shoatts from Reading Borough Council followed David's presentation. Peter show cased the beneficial work Reading Borough Council and Reading College have done to improve their NEETs issue. Peter looked at the overall strategy Reading has taken and the membership of the 'NEET task group'; the organisations involved in making the project a success. Some of the issues Reading faced were that 'one size' does not fit all and that the critical thing is to be flexible as the most important thing to do is to create a programme that is bespoke to the individual.

The key messages to take away from Peters experience were that the NEETs figure has fallen to 6.5 %, in Reading, but those last few will be the most challenging to reach, any connections with the voluntary sector will be of benefit and that we need an 'exit strategy' from schools and colleges in

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order to decrease the percentage further and reduce the risk of losing contact with people once they have finished their studies as here is where the risk of becoming NEET increases.

Rafiq Chohan began the first of three presentations from our LAA Exemplar projects. Rafiq, from Slough Borough Council, focused his presentation on 'Targeted employment support: Overcoming barriers to engagement with vulnerable groups.' Rafiq examined how important partnership working is to Slough and that "Partnership working is a key factor in providing a tailored approach to the needs of individuals." One challenge Slough had found throughout the project was how to get young people into the right kind of education in order for them to move forward into employment. They are looking for the transition to be seamless. Positive outcomes have been seen in the area; unemployment in Slough is the lowest it has been over the last year and Slough's performance is better than other Berkshire areas despite more challenging socio economic factors.

Peter Milford, a consultant working in Portsmouth, was our second guest speaker to give his presentation on our LAA Exemplar projects. Peter gave an overview of the NEETs situation in Portsmouth and showed that since 2004 the rate of NEETs had been rising resulting in 17% of 16 – 18 year olds in the area becoming NEET. Peter explored some of the results and outcomes from the surveys he had published resulting in the establishment of 'NEET Futures', a partnership conceived of a number of colleges across the South Hampshire area and later incorporated a range of Portsmouth City partners. The organisations included Portsmouth City Council, Portsmouth College, Motiv8, Releasing Potential and the respect programme. 'NEET Futures' offers skills towards enabling progression of this sector and aims to set up a number of re-engagement programmes progressing into September 2010.

The final presentation of the day came from Peter and Luke Lancaster, CEO and Founder of the Young Pioneers, www.youngpioneers.org/go4it. The Young Pioneers were set up to develop young people's leadership and enterprise skills by supporting those young people who are most at risk of becoming NEET. The charity was set up by Luke to raise the aspiration and skills sets of NEETs in the area of Rother. The charity looks to encourage and support young people by offering them a chance to work on personal effectiveness, live enterprise, social leadership and community projects, resulting in young people getting involved in projects and making their own mark. Some projects include; 'Knitting for Good!' and the Rother Youth Market where the young entrepreneurs make their own goods and sell them at the local market. The funds then go back into the charity to help others that are struggling with similar issues.

Overall summary and closing remarks

The day's events were summarised with a round table discussion focusing on challenges and opportunities in relation to policy developments. Some key points were raised to highlight issues that many organisations are facing. Often organisations struggled with "6th form shut door policies", "budget threats" and that the "good things are done on a small scale" rather than a large scale. The round table groups examined some of the drivers locally and found that structures of organisations often act as barriers as they are so different. It was felt that there is too much of a "one size fits all" mentality where flexibility should be a driver and that it is too early to tell if funding may be a driver or a barrier.



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The discussions concluded by asking what the organisations were doing locally to identify the nature and dynamics of the NEETs issue. The main outcome was that it is imperative to think outside the box and that shifts are happening in society and by helping to reduce the NEET factor a saving of £786,000 per year will be reached as each NEET costs £97,000 per year. Some ways that this might be achieved is by forming new partnerships, listening to others and sharing data to avoid duplication.