

YOUTH tracker

Issue 1, Summer 2009

Reporting on challenges and solutions for young people in the UK, during recession and recovery

Welcome to the first edition of the *Youth Tracker* – a quarterly newsletter looking at how Britain’s young people are faring in the recession, and what we can do to support them.

Young people growing up in Britain today are more technology-literate than ever before, and are exposed to an increasingly globalised world with, in theory at least, a wealth of opportunities. But for those living in our most disadvantaged communities in particular, finding a path to a solid future can be very challenging, especially in these difficult economic times.

The aim of this newsletter series, therefore, is to focus on what the recession – and the recovery when it comes – mean for the most disadvantaged young people, particularly those not in employment, education or training.

We have gathered new insights and opinion from key academics and policy experts, and provide a round-up of new research, statistics and news about what is happening on the ground.

Of course, we want to make sure that the *Youth Tracker* becomes a valuable resource for everyone working with young people, so please let us know what you think – see the back page for how to get in touch with us.

Carey Oppenheim,
Co-director, **ippr** and **Shaks**
Ghosh, Chief Executive, Private Equity Foundation



privateequity foundation
Empowering young people to reach their full potential

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The Private Equity Foundation (PEF) was set up to empower young people to reach their full potential. It does this by investing both money and expertise from the private equity community, to help excellent charities achieve a step-change in their impact. www.privateequityfoundation.org

Assessing the Downturn

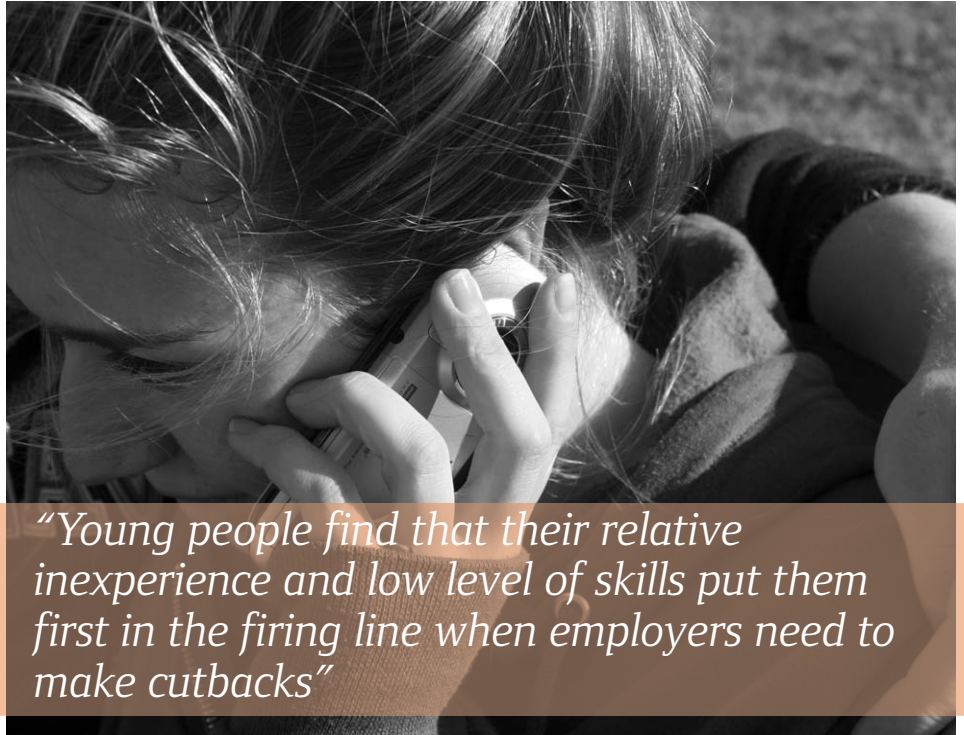
We begin this first edition of *Youth Tracker* with an in-depth assessment of what the **recession means for Britain's young people**

Although the path of this recession is difficult to predict, most experts agree that young people are likely to be hit particularly hard. Around 28 per cent of the increase in unemployment since the beginning of 2008 is accounted for by young people aged 18 to 24, although they only make up about 14 per cent of the working-age population.

Official statistics show that unemployment among 18 to 24 year olds stood at 17 per cent in the three months to April 2009, with 695,000 people in this age group now out of work. This represents a rise of 185,000 since the beginning of 2008. There has been a similar rise in the number of young people who are not in employment, education or training (so-called 'NEETs'), with further increases likely as the recession continues.

These dramatic rises in unemployment among young people are particularly concerning because youth unemployment in the UK has remained high over the last 12 years while unemployment overall was relatively low. When employment levels peaked in 2005, just over 10 per cent of 18 to 24s were unemployed, compared with just under 5 per cent of working-age adults.

Participation in education or training among 16 to 17 year olds is at an all-



"Young people find that their relative inexperience and low level of skills put them first in the firing line when employers need to make cutbacks"


time high, but among 16 and 17 years not in education or training, unemployment is particularly high, at nearly 30 per cent. The ranks of unemployed youth are likely to see a further influx over the summer as large numbers of young people leave full-time education.

Extra risk

Young people tend to suffer more than other workers in a recession because as demand for products falls, companies' first reaction is often to stop hiring new staff. This makes it more difficult for school-leavers and graduates to find a job. A survey carried out by the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development in May found that half of employers were not planning to recruit any school leavers or graduates this summer.

Meanwhile, those young people who are in work find that their relative inexperience and low-level skills put them first in the firing line when employers need to make cutbacks. It also becomes more risky for employers to take on young people who lack a proven work record when experienced older workers are queuing up to take new vacancies.

The Government expects the economy to be growing again by the end of this year, but most experts think a recovery will be delayed until 2010. However, there is no disagreement that unemployment will continue to rise and there is a broad consensus that it will peak at around 3 million – close to 10 per cent of the labour force – at some point in 2010, up from 2.26 million in the three months to April 2009.



This is bad news for young people. Tony Dolphin, Senior Economist at ippr, predicts that unemployment among those aged 16 to 24 will increase from 888,000 in the three months to April 2009 to a peak of 1.1 million in 2010. At this point, the unemployment rate for those aged 16 to 17 could be as high as 33 per cent, while for 18–24 year olds the rate will be above 20 per cent.

The long-term effects of youth unemployment are well-documented. “People who experience long durations of unemployment in their youth still have sizeable wage penalties in their forties”, says Paul Gregg, Professor of Economics at the University of Bristol. [See page 4 for an interview with Professor Gregg.](#)

With this in mind, the Government announced a major job creation programme in this year’s Budget to make sure that every young person who has been out of work for more than 12 months has access to a job or training. Done properly, this kind of programme could help to reduce the impact of youth unemployment, but questions remain about how the scheme will work. [Turn to page 8 for a more detailed look at the Future Jobs Fund.](#)

Back to school

Young people are clearly aware of what is happening in the jobs market, and many are opting to stay on in education rather than face a dispiriting search for work.

According to UCAS, the body responsible for university applications, there has been an 8 per cent rise in applications compared with last year. Further Education colleges have seen a

similar rise in applicants. Scotland’s Colleges Principals Convention estimates that applications have risen by a third across the board, with demand for places doubling in some colleges.

In effect, the recession could mean that the Government’s plan to raise the participation age in England to 18 happens sooner than intended. This might even be one positive side-effect of the downturn. The Government has announced extra funding to ensure that every 16 and 17 year old has a place in education or training. However, questions remain about the capacity of the education system to absorb large numbers of additional students.

The Government has also imposed a cap on university places for the next academic year, which could mean that around 80,000 would-be students miss out on a place. The controversial cap is partly a result of Treasury fears about the costs of funding the extra demand created by the recession. But it could mean that well-qualified young people who would rather be staying on in education are forced to look for work, potentially out-competing less able young people for whom work is the only option.

Not just jobs and courses

It makes sense to channel resources towards getting as many young people as possible into work, education or training. But in doing so, there is a danger that the most disengaged young people, for whom re-engaging in employment or education is not a realistic prospect in the short term, get sidelined and become even more excluded.

As a number of charities make clear in our [article on page 7](#), the recession

adds extra risks to attempts to re-engage vulnerable young people. Fierce competition for jobs will make it very difficult for young people completing basic courses like the Entry to Employment (E2E) programme to take the next step into work. As Professor Malcolm Payne, Head of the Youth Affairs Unit at De Montfort University, says, “although there are fairly robust systems in place in order to pick up and respond to young people, the question then becomes, what can those systems offer?” If the current jobs market means they cannot offer very much, then there is a risk of creating further disillusionment among young people.

The challenge is to combine large-scale employment and training programmes for the majority with specialist support for the most vulnerable young people that does not necessarily hinge on getting them into work or training. Yet, as our [‘Responding to recession’ feature on pages 6–8](#) demonstrates, this can be difficult when funding for youth services and re-engagement programmes are under pressure.

It is also worth considering the wider impacts of recession and economic uncertainty on young people. Although the focus is often, rightly, on work and education, the effects of parental unemployment, low income, family breakdown, anxiety and stress, could all take their toll on the mental health and well-being of young people. This is a further justification for investment in holistic services to support young people, alongside training and job creation schemes, to ensure that this recession does not create a ‘lost generation’.

EXPERT INSIGHTS

Learning from past recessions

Previous recessions can help us to understand how the current downturn might affect young people. ippr Research Fellow **Kayte Lawton** talks to Paul Gregg, Professor of Economics at Bristol University, about lessons from the past and prospects for the future

Kayte Lawton: What does the evidence from previous recessions tell us about the long-term effects of unemployment, particularly for young people?

Paul Gregg: If you lose your job during a recession, when you start work again, you will have a lower wage. That lower wage is made up of two elements:

one is the initial impact of losing your job, and the other is the longer you're out of work, the lower your wages are when you eventually start working again.

Now the interesting thing about that is that the impact effect tends to recover, so two to three years later you've clawed back the initial loss in wages. But the duration effect – the effect of being out of work for a longer period of time – that is the scarring effect. Wages do not tend to recover

for people who have been out of work for a relatively long period of time.

With young people, those that experience long durations of unemployment in their youth still have sizeable wage penalties in their forties. This is one of the arguments for trying to avoid long-term unemployment.

KL: What should the Government be doing to maintain employment levels, particularly in the case of young people?

PG: There has been a lot of discussion about the idea of a jobs guarantee.

This is not brand new, people have done it before and we've got to learn the lessons of what did and didn't work.

“Young people who experience

long durations of unemployment in their youth still have sizeable wage penalties in their forties”

Firstly, you need to have a period of intensive job search activity before the period of work experience kicks in, which seems to be in the Flexible New Deal, so that's pretty well there. Secondly, the work needs to be part-time, so the individual has time to do job search and deal with their

underlying problems, alongside the work experience.

But particularly with young people aged 16 or 17, the first thing you want them to be doing is not leaving school – you want them to be in education doing serious qualifications which lead to long-term employment. So you want them to be doing the Level 3 Apprenticeships and A-Levels and equivalent GNVQs, and so on.

KL: Some people are saying that the Government should bring forward its plans to raise the participation age, but then there is a concern that the right provision isn't in place yet. Where do you stand on that issue?

PG: I don't think we can do it quickly enough. But there are things that we can do now. Firms will lay apprentices off during a recession so we need to get people to stay in the apprenticeship but based at FE [Further Education] colleges until a new employer can be found. [This is now an option for many apprentices.] You could also perhaps increase the Education Maintenance Allowance from this autumn, and make it available to people doing vocational courses as well.

I also think the whole 16 and 17 year old picture at the moment in terms of benefits is a mess. There are various fall-back benefits which they can get instead of JSA [Jobseeker's Allowance] but there's no focus within those benefits on where the person is going. What we need is an education and training allowance for young people which works in a similar way to JSA, but with the focus on looking for and



moving into full-time education, rather than moving into work.

For the 18-plus group of NEETs, within the jobs guarantee idea, it is right that there is an education or training option, as well as a work option. This is particularly the case where the young person has a record of low educational achievement so far, which is a big predictor of later employment.

A longer version of this interview is available at www.ippr.org/youthtracker

Professor Gregg is a labour market expert who has advised government on welfare reform as well as writing extensively on youth employment.

Conservative thinking

David Willetts MP describes how the Conservatives would address the 'NEETS' issue

There is a wealth of talent and potential in our young people today. Whenever I visit colleges, universities and training facilities, I am struck by the creativity and hard work of so many students and apprentices. But too many are left behind and we are in danger of letting a whole generation fall victim to the recession.

At the end of last year, there were 860,000 16 to 24 year olds in England not in education, employment or training. One in eight young people was 'NEET' at the start of the decade; that ratio is now one in seven. International comparisons show that as

other countries brought down their NEET rate in the boom years, the numbers were increasing here. Perhaps most shockingly, we are a lowly twenty-fifth out of twenty-nine in the OECD league table for NEETs.

An illuminating study by Rathbone and the Nuffield Foundation found that most young people who are NEET have remarkably 'normal' aspirations: to own their own home, find a secure job and drive a nice car. Yet the same group struggle to identify the pathways to achieving those aspirations. The study concluded: "the issue is perhaps less about raising aspirations, and more about providing the means to realise existing aspirations." This has deep implications for policymakers.

A primary role for the new Department for Business, Innovation and Skills should be to oversee transitions from childhood to adulthood – from school to further

education and ultimately employment. This means creating a streamlined Further Education Funding Council, allowing FE colleges to

respond to local needs and letting in voluntary and private providers. And it means providing independent, professional careers advice to every secondary school pupil, distinct from the existing Connexions mish-mash.

Too many pupils are given no guidance on how GCSE and A-Level

choices could affect their futures. Many will not even consider the option of university simply because their parents didn't go, or they don't know anyone like them who has gone to university. The decline in quality of careers advice since the establishment of Connexions has been a calamity and it will be a priority of ours to put that right.

One of Rathbone and Nuffield's key findings suggested that many NEETs were so disillusioned by their school experience that they would only be re-engaged outside a classroom environment. The Conservatives have explained how we will set aside £100 million from the Train to Gain budget to fund learning opportunities designed specifically to appeal to NEETs.

"We need a streamlined Further Education Funding Council that allows FE colleges to respond to local needs and lets in voluntary and private providers"

Our other proposals include a big expansion in apprenticeships and an apprenticeship clearing-house to make sure apprentices do not become NEETs if their employers go out of business. The huge NEET problem is one of the most tragic legacies of this Labour Government. The combined effect of our policies would be to offer the practical help young people need now more than ever.

David Willetts is Conservative MP for Havant and Shadow Secretary for Universities and Skills.



Councils challenged

How are organisations working on the ground tackling the challenges thrown up by the recession? Here, three local councils leading efforts to reduce the number of NEET young people tell their stories

Beacon councils

The Beacon Scheme was established to reward and share best practice in service delivery across local government.

Councils are awarded Beacon status in ten different themes by demonstrating a clear vision, excellent services and a desire to innovate.

The councils of Sheffield, Cumbria and Wolverhampton were awarded Beacon status under the 'Better Brighter Futures' theme last year. This theme focuses on the 14–19 agenda, with an emphasis on raising participation and the quality of outcomes.

For the Better Brighter Futures Beacons, it is too early to know what the precise impact of the recession will be. "We have not felt anything yet really and we do not expect to until the current cohort in [school] Year 11 leaves. It has been OK so far, but it's too early to say", says Adrienne Carmichael, County Manager for Continuous Learning at Cumbria County Council. She reflects the uncertainty over how post-16 routes might change over the next few months.

"It's all anecdotal at the moment", says John Price, Deputy Head of 14–19 Learning at Wolverhampton Council. "We are expecting issues to

'Better Brighter Futures'

Cumbria County Council

Cumbria has adopted the innovative use of ICT as a way of overcoming some of the challenges of delivering high quality services in a sparsely populated area. The council developed an electronic Individual Learning Plan to help young people plan transitions after age 16, and employed a number of outreach workers to work with young people who had difficulties accessing services.



Sheffield City Council

Officials in Sheffield have focused on working with local employers, and helping to build relationships between colleges, schools and business. This has helped to improve the range of vocational learning options available for young people, and to ensure that learning opportunities are closely linked to the kinds of jobs that are likely to be available locally.



Wolverhampton City Council

Wolverhampton has pioneered collaborations between schools and third sector providers, which enable them to provide a tailored, non-classroom based service to young people at risk of becoming NEET at 16. The council also worked with local learning providers to develop a charter to ensure that every young person has access to appropriate, high-quality, 14-19 learning opportunities.

arise but we have not felt anything directly at the moment."

Nevertheless, the Beacon councils are bracing themselves for new challenges, particularly for the NEET group. "I cannot see how the NEET problem cannot grow. The types of learning progression that are attractive to the NEET clientele is going to rely on employment, and if that is not there, the chances are they will

become NEET, despite their own best efforts", says Price. "I can see a lot of frustration and they may feel cheated", he adds.

Building on existing strengths

Wolverhampton plans to build on its current work. "We have a strategy that works and we have kids engaged. The





recognition of our Beacon status provides some reassurance of that. So we have created a platform we are going to stick to and continue to develop despite the recession”, says Price. Carmichael adds, “we focus a lot of attention on engagement activities so we think we can probably shore up any problems before they get really bad. Our work is about addressing all of these issues so it will just be more of the same.”

Dee Desgranges, Strategic Support Manager for Lifelong Learning and Skills at Sheffield City Council, feels that working closely with the third sector will help ensure they can deliver targeted support at a time of rising demand and shrinking budgets. “We can commission from community organisations in the NEET hotspots across the city and take advantage of the local knowledge that charities have”, says Desgranges.

Cumbria faces a unique set of challenges, as the county has a relatively small group of NEETs, but significant numbers of young people ‘in jobs without training’. On this problem, however, Adrienne Carmichael says, “we think that if the recession is going to have any impact it is likely to make that better not worse”, as young people are likely to return to education or training as the job market tightens.

The third sector’s response

How is the economic climate affecting charities working with young people, and what are their concerns for the future?

The major challenge for everyone working with young people is the deteriorating jobs market, with NEET young people in particular facing extra competition.

“One thing we have seen is a significant number of people who are qualified applying for apprenticeships rather than graduate jobs. For example, university leavers are applying for apprenticeship roles when previously they would not have”, says Katy Haigh, Deputy Chief Executive at Vital Regeneration, a London-based organisation working in deprived communities.

Overcoming the reluctance of employers to hire young people who are NEET is tough when competition for jobs is so high, but Brian Gibson, National Manager for Young People’s Services at employment charity Tomorrow’s People, believes it is possible. “You need to show that these young people are likely to be more

enthusiastic and loyal employees than someone who feels over-qualified, because that job really is their aspiration”, he says.

Most of the organisations we spoke to were concerned about the prospect of re-engaging vulnerable young people with the aim of getting them back into work if there are no real job opportunities locally. “We have to try to keep the young person’s aspirations realistic in terms of what is on offer. If the job is just not there we encourage them to consider other options like volunteering”, says Brian Gibson. In this vein Tomorrow’s People is developing a social enterprise to provide a possible destination for the young people it works with.


There are signs that worsening job prospects are making some young people think again about education and training. As Peter Cross at Skillforce, an organisation that helps to develop skills among at-risk young

people, says: “We are seeing more young people recognising the need to get the vocational qualifications that we have on offer, so they actually stand a chance of getting a job in a very tough marketplace.”

More for your money

Young people may be bearing the brunt of this recession, but many of the organisations working to support them are struggling too. Charities are reporting greater pressure to deliver more for less in their contracts with funders, and future cuts in public funding are a major threat. “Public sector financing, given the country’s debt, will get much tighter and charities will probably be one of the first victims, maybe not this year, but definitely next year”, says Andrew Purvis, Chief Executive of youth work charity Fairbridge.

Professor Malcolm Payne, Head of the Youth Affairs Unit at De Montfort University, also believes that the lack of opportunities for young people during the recession could create serious tensions for the organisations trying to



work with them. "If there is increasing pressure on the frontline staff who have to deal with these young people, the potential is for those staff to be pretty despairing because they know there is not really very much they can offer", he says.

Finding a way through

In response to funding pressures from local councils and other funders, the charities we spoke to were clearly focusing on 'operational excellence' and value for money. But many were concerned that financial pressures would add to funders' reluctance to invest in 'soft outcomes' like improvements in confidence and well-being. "These days funders want more for their money and this leads to a focus on hard outcomes, which if you are working with harder to reach NEET young people are harder to achieve in a short timeframe", says Carol Jackson, 13-19 Youth Project Developer at Community Links.

Fundraising is also a key issue at the moment and the charities we spoke to were all keen to reduce their reliance on a single funding stream. "We are aware of what is going on in the outside world and have a fundraising strategy to make sure that we are not relying too much on one or two sources", says Katy Haigh at Vital Regeneration.

Inevitably, there will be redundancies and cuts in services, just when extra services are needed most. Andrew Purvis of Fairbridge says: "We want to be growing as an organisation, to reflect the fact that our services are so badly needed. Our business plan had a growth trajectory but for the next three years or so we are going to be flat-lining and hopefully not shrinking."

POLICY NEWS & ANALYSIS

Budget Report 2009 – a job or training for every young person

The Future Jobs Fund, which provides a guarantee of a job or training place for all 18 to 24 year olds who have been claiming Job Seeker's Allowance for 12 months, was the centrepiece of the April Budget. Placements will be part-time and last for at least six months, with the Government investing £1.4 billion in the programme over two years to create 150,000 jobs. Participation is not mandatory but it may be made so in the future.

Responsibility for delivering the programme will rest with local authorities, working in partnership with the third sector. Initially, the Government wanted schemes to go live in October 2009, but that deadline is now looking doubtful: it plans to announce the winning schemes in early autumn, meaning there will not be enough time for programmes to be up and running in October.

There are also concerns about the lack of incentives for providers to help young people find work while they are on the scheme. The jobs will be part-time, giving participants the chance to job-search while they are on the programme. But without proper incentives to encourage providers to help them find a longer term job, young people could find themselves re-joining the dole queue when the six-month programme ends. See www.dwp.gov.uk/campaigns/futurejobsfund/index.asp for more.

The Chancellor also announced 50,000 subsidised traineeships for unemployed young people to work in the care sector.

Jobcentre Plus will receive £1.7 billion in additional funding to help it cope with additional demand for its services as a result of the recession.

New minimum wage rates – and what they mean for young people

In May, the Government announced that the National Minimum Wage for young people aged 18 to 21 will rise to £4.83 an hour in October 2009, up 6p on last year's figure. The rate for 16 to 17 year olds will rise by 5p to £3.57 an hour and the adult rate by 6p to £5.80.

These small rises come after relatively generous increases in previous years and reflect the increasingly gloomy economic outlook. The Government also agreed to extend the adult rate to all 21 year olds from October 2010, and to further investigate the case for a minimum wage for apprentices.

These changes were based on recommendations from the Low Pay Commission, which also carries out research each year into how the minimum wage is working.

The Commission is particularly concerned about the impact of the minimum wage on young people's decisions about work and education. It has found that there is no evidence that the minimum wage has had a detrimental effect on young people's participation in full-time education, or that it has reduced employment opportunities for young people.

The full report is available at www.lowpay.gov.uk/lowpay/report/pdf/7997-BERR-Low%20Pay%20Commission-WEB.pdf

New Research

A Stitch in Time: Tackling educational disengagement

Demos, May 2009, Sonia Sodha and Silvia Guglielmi

Looking at the causes of post-16 exclusion, this report focuses particularly on the education system. The authors argue that having a negative experience of mainstream education is the primary cause of a young person becoming 'NEET', and that the Government's failure to recognise this has led to too many top-down, ineffective policies.

The report makes a number of recommendations about how to build core academic skills and social and emotional competence, as well as increasing young people's aspirations and engaging their parents. It advocates a national, targeted literacy and numeracy programme complemented by a range of locally-based initiatives, developed and delivered by local charities and education authorities.

It also recommends ways to improve the implementation of national policy initiatives at the local level, such as through better commissioning processes. The authors are particularly concerned about the concept of 'scaling up' successful local initiatives, as the evidence suggests that best practice often gets lost along the way.

www.demos.co.uk/publications/a-stitch-in-time-tackling-educational-disengagement

Education for All: The future of education and training for 14-19 year olds

Nuffield Review of 14-19 Education and Training, June 2009, Richard Pring et al

This report is the culmination of a major six-year inquiry into the future of 14-19 learning in England and Wales. The authors' vision for 14-19 education is that it provides young people with the knowledge and understanding to get on in life, the competence to make decisions about the future, and a 'moral seriousness' to shape their choices.

The Review found that the complexity of the English education system – in contrast to the simpler system in Wales – makes it difficult to meet the needs of all young people and promotes competition among providers. Furthermore, those who are most in need – young people in the 'NEET' group – get the least investment, with funding being mainly short-term and project-based.

The report recommends a streamlining of institutions and funding to simplify the system and encourage different agencies to work together. Third sector organisations and youth services need predictable, long-term funding to support young people outside mainstream education. The authors also argue for tighter controls on apprenticeships so that they are recognised as providing the highest quality training opportunities.

www.nuffield14-19review.org.uk/cgi/documents/documents.cgi?a=206&t=template.htm

in brief...

Increasing Participation: Understanding young people aged 16 and 17 who do not participate in education or training (Dept. for Children, Schools and Families, January 2009)

Based on interviews with young people, this DCSF report tries to understand why 16-17s are either NEET or in a job with no training, and how they can be re-engaged.

www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RR072.pdf

Engaging Young People: Local authority youth work 2005-08 (Ofsted, March 2009)

This report presents evidence from inspections of 100 youth service providers from 2005 to 2008. It identifies an overall improvement in levels of service provision but concludes that there is much room for improvement.

www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/Engaging-young-people-local-authority-youth-work-2005-08

Progression Through Apprenticeships: The final report of the Skills Commission's Inquiry into apprenticeships (March 2009)

This major inquiry raises concerns about the effect of recession and the Government's focus on 14-19 Diplomas, which may lead to less investment in apprenticeships. It also highlights the need for more funding for 19-25 apprenticeships.

www.policyconnect.org.uk/docs/content/pc_apprenticeship_report-0.pdf

in brief...

Learning to Live: Museums, young people and education (ippr/NMDC, May 2009)

This collection of essays, authored by experts in education and culture, looks at the role of museums in young people's wellbeing and learning. The book includes a chapter by Tim Desmond, Chief Executive of Nottingham's Galleries of Justice, which suggests that museums are the ideal places to offer opportunities to NEET young people, but a radical change in their structure and image is needed.

www.ippr.org.uk/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=665

Best Practice in Tackling 'NEETs': Report for practitioners (Learning and Skills Council, December 2008)

This research identifies best practice for supporting 16–18 year olds who are NEET in West Yorkshire. It makes some recommendations for employability schemes and the development of the National Apprenticeship Service.

<http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/YorkshireandtheHumber/HOSTWestYorkshireResearchreport.pdf>

Rallying Together: Raleigh's work with disadvantaged young people (ippr, February 2009)

This study of Raleigh International's work looks at how international volunteering experiences can help improve the life chances of disadvantaged young people, and highlights the additional support that these young people may need. It finds that being in an unfamiliar, challenging environment contributes to personal development.

www.ippr.org.uk/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=643

Research ...

Second Chances: Re-engaging young people in education and training

Barnardo's, March 2009, Jane Evans, Deborah Meyer, Anne Pinney and Barbara Robinson

Drawing on the experiences of young people who use Barnardo's services, this report makes recommendations designed to ensure that all young people benefit as the education participation age in England rises to 18.

The authors stress the need for personalised learning that focuses on 'life skills' as well as an appropriate mix of vocational and academic learning. In order to deliver this for all young people, they argue for an expansion of funding for 16–18 education and a clear plan for growth in the sector. This should be matched by an expansion in vocational learning opportunities and a series of re-engagement strategies aimed at helping young people overcome social barriers to re-engagement, such as poverty experienced within workless households.

The third sector is also called on to increase its involvement in delivering services, and council officials delivering 14–19 education are urged to develop closer working relationships with local employers.

www.barnardos.org.uk/10942_2nd_chances_report.pdf

Knife Crime: Home Affairs Select Committee Report

House of Commons, May 2009

The Home Affairs Select Committee has found that although criminal activity involving knives has fallen since the 1990s, there is some evidence that the number of deaths and serious injuries caused by knife violence has recently increased. Knife crime is largely confined to young males from deprived inner city areas, and there are fears that carrying a knife is becoming 'normal' in these areas.

The Committee found that around 85 per cent of people who carry knives say they do so for their own 'protection'. Fuelled both by media coverage and direct experiences of knife crime, young people begin to feel that everyone in the local area carries a knife, so they need to as well.

The report advocates the separate treatment of violent offenders and young people who may carry a knife but have not committed a violent offence. The Committee supports stop and search but wants knife crime dealt with as part of a violence prevention strategy that views violence primarily as a public health issue. The report identifies successful local preventative and 'gang exit' programmes, which need to be supported and embedded in other local communities.

www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmhaff/112/112i.pdf

... and Statistics ...

Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16-18 year olds in England: First release

Department for Children, Schools and Families, June 2009

New figures from the DCSF show an increase in the number of NEET 16-18 year olds. The proportion of young people who are NEET in England rose from 9.7 per cent at the end of 2007 to 10.3 per cent at the end of 2008. There are now around 208,000 NEET 16-18 year olds in England, over half of whom are aged 18. In fact, 18 year olds were the only age group to see increases in the NEET population, with small falls among 16 and 17 year olds. This suggests that 18 year olds are facing particular challenges when they leave full-time education.

Despite this rise, the proportion of 16-18 year olds in education and training has reached a record high, increasing from 78 per cent in 2007 to 79.7 per cent at the end of 2008. This indicates that the increase in the NEET population has been caused by a rise in the number of young people unable to find work, and highlights the early effects of the recession on youth employment. The longer term trend among 16-18 year olds shows an increase in participation in full-time education over the last decade, coupled with a fall in the proportion of young people in work-based learning. The proportion of young people who are NEET has remained broadly stable, at between 8 and 10 per cent, over the last ten years.

www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000849/SFR12_2009.pdf

NEET Statistics – Quarterly Brief (England only)

Department for Children, Schools and Families, June 2009

This is the second statistical release on NEET young people from DCSF in June, and provides a summary of all the official data sources on NEETs. Unlike the First Release described above, this Quarterly Brief provides data on 16-24 year olds and shows that the number of NEET young people in this age group rose to 935,000 in England in the first quarter of 2009. This represents an increase of 125,000 compared to the same quarter last year, and means that 15.6 per cent of 16-24 year olds are NEET, compared with 13.6 per cent a year ago. David Willets, the Conservative shadow minister for universities and skills, described this significant rise as 'shocking evidence that young people are indeed the victims of Labour's recession'.

Data on NEETs tend to follow a pattern that reflects the academic year, so we can expect to see further rises in their numbers when data for summer and autumn become available. A peak is likely in the third quarter (July to September), and the number could climb above 1 million. The Quarterly Brief also shows that the majority of NEET young people – nearly 90 per cent – are aged 18 to 24, with relatively small numbers of 16 and 17 year old NEETs.

www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STR/d000751/NEETQuarterlyBriefQ12009.pdf

in brief...

Stories of Early School Leaving: Pointers for policy and practice (Brotherhood of St Laurence, April 2009)

This Australian publication follows eight young people who left school early, to understand the impact that had on their later lives. The authors look at ways of improving the experience of school, better support for 'at-risk' young people and a more 'youth-centred' approach among welfare to work providers.

www.bsl.org.au/pdfs/Taylor_stories_of_early_school_leaving.pdf

Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion in Wales 2009 (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, June 2009)

The JRF presents evidence in this new report to show that nearly half of all unemployed people in Wales are under the age of 25, showing the disproportionate effect of the recession on young people. The report also identifies a pattern of increasing child poverty in Wales, a trend that is occurring in the rest of the UK, too.

www.jrf.org.uk/publications/monitoring-poverty-wales-2009

Forthcoming...

Teenagers' Health: What should be done? (4Children, July 2009)

4Children has recently carried out a series of 'Make Space for Health' pilots with young people that identified health issues including obesity, body image and sexual and mental health as being major concerns for them. This report is based on the findings from those pilots, which deliver integrated health support through youth services and centres. It will be published on 1 July 2009.

in brief...

There are further news and research summaries on the Youth Tracker webpages: www.ippr.org/youthtracker

Staying On: Making the extra years in education count for all young people (Equality and Human Rights Commission, June 2009)

Addressing the barriers to remaining in post-16 education, this report found that social class and gender continue to have a major influence on young people's career aspirations. The Commission will be exploring the implications for providing impartial, high-quality careers advice, and making some wider recommendations to government to improve the options available to young people.

www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/ehrc_education_60pp.pdf

Towards a Popular, Preventative Youth Justice System (ippr, June 2009)

More and more young people have been drawn into the youth justice system over the last 10 years, with



little reduction in offending and reoffending rates. This report makes the case for an English youth justice system which is preventative, tiered and diversionary, building on work

already underway in Scotland. This should be coupled with increased efforts to demonstrate the benefits of this approach to the public.

www.ippr.org.uk/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=673

The Local Government Association is launching a programme of work

highlighting the challenges and successes in working with young people not engaged in education, training or employment for local authorities. The project will include policy analysis, an examination of the issues surrounding the current NEET group, opportunities for stakeholders to share their perspectives and examples of best practice from across England and Wales.

For more information contact: Penny.Lamb@lga.gov.uk

Feedback

We would be very interested to hear what you think about the *Youth Tracker* and other ground it could cover. We have uploaded a survey to www.ippr.org/youthtracker and would be most grateful if you could spend five minutes completing it, so we can make the next issue of the *Youth Tracker* even better.

Youth Tracker: Acknowledgements | Contact us

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If you would like to discuss making a contribution to the next issue, or have any other comments or suggestions, please contact Kayte Lawton on 020 7470 6169 / k.lawton@ippr.org

