

Reponses to questions raised following presentation on NEETs by Research & Library Services to Employment & Learning Committee on 3 February 2010

This briefing provides some additional information on the following issues:

1. Link between suicide statistics and NEETs (Question raised by Sue Ramsey)
2. Can NEETs be predicted at an early age? (Question raised by Anna Lo)
3. Latest statistics on school leavers' qualifications and school drop-out rates (Question raised by Pat Ramsey)

1. Link between suicide statistics and NEETs

- According to research carried out by the Samaritans, the rate of suicide and undetermined deaths among 15-24 years old males in 2008 was 29 per 100,000 population of that age group. This was higher than the overall rate of 25 per 100,000 population for all age groups but lower than the 31 per 100,000 population over 14 years of age for males. Among 15-24 year old females the rate of suicide and undetermined deaths was 6 per 100,000 of population of that age group. This compares with the overall rate of 7 per 100,000 population for all age groups or 8 per 100,000 population over 14 years of age for females.¹
- In a recent survey of 16-to-25-year-olds conducted by The Prince's Trust 35% of those respondents who were not in employment, education or training (NEETs) claim to have felt suicidal. 25% of all young people who responded to the survey claim to have felt suicidal.²
- Research has shown that suicide risk is related, among other factors, to socio-economic circumstances including unemployment. Research carried out in 2008 using data from a 5-year longitudinal study linking all those enumerated at the 2001 Northern Ireland census to residents in the subsequent 5 years, looking at area factors and suicide, found a relationship between suicide and unemployment. After adjustment for age, gender, marital status and household composition, unemployed people had a 68% excess suicide risk when compared to employed people. Further adjustment for measures of deprivation and baseline health status reduced this to a 28% excess.³
- A 2008 survey analysing data relating to 60 cases of suicide that occurred in Derry/Londonderry over the period January 2000-December 2005 found that 29 out of the 60 cases of suicide had been unemployed (48.3%).⁴

¹ Samaritans: *Suicide in the UK and Republic of Ireland, Statistics 1992-2008*, <http://www.samaritans.org/PDF/SamaritansSuicideStatistics1999-2008.pdf>

² A sample of 2,088 16-to-25-year-olds took part in an online poll conducted by YouGov on behalf of The Prince's Trust in December 2009. The data was weighted according to age, gender and region, to be representative of all UK-to-25-year-olds. Of the sample, 130 respondents were classified as NEETs. See *The Prince's Trust: YouGov Youth Index 2010*, http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/pdf/Youth_Index_2010.pdf

³ O'Reilly D., Rosato M., Connolly S. and Cardwell C., *Area factors and suicide: 5-year follow-up of the Northern Ireland population*, *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 192, pp.106-111, (2008), <http://bjp.rcpsych.org/cgi/content/abstract/192/2/106>

⁴ Burns A., Goodall E. and Moore T., *A study of suicide in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, for the year period spanning 2000-2005*, *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine*, 15, pp.148-157, (2008)

2. Can NEETs be predicted at an early age?

Between September 2007 and March 2008 Swindon Borough Council Children's Services carried out a research and development project aimed at clarifying early identification and prevention measures that could help reduce the number of young people not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) in the 13-19 phase. Methodology included desk and telephone research, face-to-face interviews with key organisations, questionnaires, surveys, focus groups and workshops. The report identified a range of interrelated situational, behavioural and external factors which might indicate that a young person may enter the NEET group.⁵

The following is an extract (with minor adjustments) from the said document, Hughes J. and Opie M., Swindon Borough Council Children's Services, *Final Report of NEET Prevention Research and Development Project September 2007 – March 2008*, <http://www.swslim.org.uk/downloads/sl2569.pdf>

Situational/ personal context

It was recognised that the following situational and personal factors *may* indicate that a young person is in danger of entering the NEET group.

- Where there are 'home' issues, for example
 1. one parent family
 2. unemployment in the family
 3. long term generational 'worklessness'
 4. parents / families' own lack of confidence / belief in education / qualifications resulting from their 'bad experiences' of 'failing 'at school
 5. absence of family / community models of achievement in relation to qualifications /
 6. education / involvement in learning
 7. parental mental health, drug or alcohol problems
 8. culture of low aspiration and lack of encouragement to take up activities / learning
 9. bereavement
 10. young carers - of own child / parent / not of own child
 11. being looked after / in care
 12. leaving care
 13. housing
- SEN and Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD) statemented
- Physical disability
- Complex health needs requiring time away from learning for, for example, appointments, hospitalization / unhealthy lifestyle (poor diet, obesity, lack of exercise)
- Lower literacy and / or numeracy skills and those with English as an Additional Language (EAL) / English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)
- Home educated
- Young people returning from out of borough placements e.g residential schools
- Mental health issues
- Able but not stimulated by learning environment
- Supervision by the YOT

⁵ Hughes J. and Opie M., Swindon Borough Council Children's Services, *Final Report of NEET Prevention Research and Development Project September 2007 – March 2008*, <http://www.swslim.org.uk/downloads/sl2569.pdf>

- Pregnancy
- Teenage mothers
- Refugee
- Asylum seeker
- Ethnicity
- Parents / carers not involved in options choices
- Lack of interested / involved / significant 1:1 support (parent/carer/teacher/PA/key worker)
- Repeated experience of 'failing' and/or labelled as 'thick' resulting in self fulfilling prophecy

Behaviours

The research also identified that the following inter-related behaviours *may* indicate that a young person is at risk of entering the NEET group

- Late arrival / non attendance at school, college, training provider etc
- Loss of interest in studies / absence of homework / under / low achievement
- Not getting on with teachers
- Bullying / being bullied
- Mixing with the 'wrong crowd'
- Exclusion
- Drug, alcohol, substance misuse and increased likelihood of smoking
- Self harm
- Mental health issues
- Low self esteem /Lack of confidence
- Depression
- Anger / aggression
- Avoidance of/ non-engagement with out of school activities and/or 'helping'/statutory agencies
- Offending

External Factors

External factors such as the following, were seen as exacerbating the problem

- Lack of person centred approaches
- Lack of action by/support from staff to prevent young people leaving education/ training
- Insufficient access to information, advice and guidance
- Limited access to positive out of school activities
- Absence of appropriate placements
- No suitable / lack of available courses(s) at school / college
- Over emphasis on exams
- Lack of finance for study
- Problems with enrolment
- Lack of support in the learning context
- Lack of suitable equipment / clothing
- Insufficient / no access to quiet space for study
- Lack of access to a computer
- Lack of transport
- Lack of appropriate and flexible formal / informal routes to accreditation
- Limited employment opportunities / employment market - e.g. for Level 1 young people
- Lack of support in the workplace
- Lack of sustained funding for initiatives

- Institutional sounding titles of statutory agencies e.g. 'Youth Service'

(End of extract)

The study found that it was often possible to identify at a young age, sometimes even at primary school, those in danger of entering the NEET group.⁶

A 2000 Government statistical bulletin, *Youth Cohort Study: Education, Training and Employment of 16-18 year olds in England and the factors associated with non-participation*, provides information factors associated with those not participating at both 16 and 17 years old. Although 10 years old, the paper provides useful insights into the characteristics of those not in education, training or employment at an early age.

- According to the Youth Cohort Survey the likelihood of being NEET increases markedly as qualifications decrease: over a quarter of 16 and 17 year olds and over a third of 18 year olds with no/unknown qualifications were NEET. However despite this, there are still many of the NEET group who are well qualified.
- For each age (16, 17, 18) those young people with a disability or health problem were about twice as likely to be NEET as those without a disability or health problem.
- Those whose parents are in managerial/professional occupations are least likely to be NEET, while those whose parents are in manual occupations are more likely to be NEET. For young persons with neither parent in full-time employment, the chances of being NEET were about twice that of those young people who had at least one parent working in full-time employment.
- At 16 the likelihood of being NEET is much higher among those living with no parent compared to living with only one parent. Those living with both parents are less likely again to be NEET. At 18 the difference is much smaller.
- Truancy and exclusion from school are also key factors; about a quarter of those playing truant for days and weeks at a time are NEET at 16 and about a third are NEET both at 17 and 18. A third of those who were excluded in years 10 or 11 were NEET at 17.⁷

Research & Library Services are currently liaising with Michael Rosato at Queen's University on the possibility of using data from the Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study (NILS) to conduct some further research into early years' risk factors associated with becoming NEET after leaving school. NILS links administrative data on individuals to Census data and is therefore a potentially useful source of longitudinal information that can be used to identify risk factors related to a variety of outcomes in later years. It is not clear at this stage, however, whether or not the results of this research will be available in time to inform the Committee's Inquiry into NEETs.

⁶ Hughes J. and Opie M., Swindon Borough Council Children's Services, *Final Report of NEET Prevention Research and Development Project September 2007 – March 2008*, <http://www.swslim.org.uk/downloads/sl2569.pdf>

⁷ Statistical Bulletin Number 02/2000, *Youth Cohort Study: Education, Training and Employment of 16-18 year olds in England and the factors associated with non-participation*, <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b000162/index.shtml>

3. Latest statistics on school leavers' qualifications and school drop-out rates

- The latest statistics on school leavers' qualifications are available from the Department of Education. Age-related breakdown did not seem readily available. The table below displays the highest qualification of school leavers

Table 1: Highest Qualifications of School Leavers 2003/04 to 2007/08, Northern Ireland¹, (Source: The Department of Education, Highest Qualification of School Leavers 2004-2008, http://www.deni.gov.uk/highest_qualification_of_school_leavers_2004-08.pdf)

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
	%	%	%	%	%
A levels					
3 or more (or equivalent) ²	37.2	39.4	39.8	39.0	44.0
2 (or equivalent) ²	5.1	4.9	4.9	5.6	2.7
1	1.9	1.9	1.8	2.6	2.2
GCSEs					
5+ A*-C (or equivalent) ³	16.5	16.8	17.7	17.5	18.0
1-4 A*-C (or equivalent) ³	19.7	18.9	19.2	19.9	19.8
Other grades (1+ D-G) ⁴	14.0	13.1	12.1	11.5	9.7
5+ A*-G (or equivalent) ⁵	41.6	40.2	41.0	41.6	40.8
1-4 A*-G (or equivalent) ⁵	8.5	8.6	8.0	7.4	6.6
No GCSEs ⁶	5.6	5.0	4.5	3.9	3.6
No Formal Qualifications ⁷	4.9	3.5	3.2	3.0	2.8
Total Leavers	100	100	100	100	100

NOTES

1. Excludes special and independent schools.
2. Includes GNVQ Advanced qualifications.
3. Includes Grades A*-C only and GNVQ Intermediate qualifications.
4. Includes Grades D-G only and GNVQ Foundation qualifications
5. Includes GNVQ Intermediate and GNVQ Foundation qualifications.
6. Includes those who undertook no GCSE examinations or obtained no graded results but who obtained other qualifications such as RSA, Pitman, City and Guilds etc.
7. Includes only those with no qualifications of any kind.

NB The non-shaded rows sum to the total. Figures in the shaded rows overlap with other rows.

- It is difficult to ascertain school drop-out rates specifically; however the Department of Education provides statistics on the level of participation in full-time education and vocational training in schools and FE colleges by 16

and 17 year olds. Information for 15 year olds does not seem to be readily available. The table below displays this information from 2005/06 to 2008/09.

Table 2: Participation in full-time education and vocational training in schools and FE colleges by 16 & 17 year olds, 2005/06 to 2008/09 for Northern Ireland. (Source: Department of Education, Statistical Press Release, Participation in Full-Time Education and Vocational Training by 16 and 17 year olds in Northern Ireland 2008/09,

http://www.deni.gov.uk/participation_rates_press_release_update_for_200809.doc)

		2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
		(Includes vocational training outside the FE sector)			
		%	%	%	%
16 year olds	Males	85.4	88.9	86.5	87.5
	Females	96.4	97.0	94.9	94.7
	Total	90.8	92.9	90.6	91.0
17 year olds	Males	75.5	81.0	80.9	77.6
	Females	90.0	93.1	89.7	87.4
	Total	82.6	86.9	85.2	82.4
16 & 17 year olds	Males	80.4	85.0	83.7	82.6
	Females	93.2	95.1	92.3	91.1
	Total	86.6	89.9	87.9	86.8

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