

## Why do Young People become 'Not in Education, Employment or Training'?



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## Introduction

This report was commissioned by Young Suffolk, as lead of the Suffolk VCS Learning Consortium Youth Working Group, to investigate the reasons why young people (primarily 16-18 year-olds) become 'NEET' (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

This research was considered important to progress three of the six of the Objectives of this Working Group, namely:

- to develop good communication with a variety of youth networks and co-ordinating learning and skills needs information
- to developing opportunities within VCS youth organisations to assist NEET young people
- to identify processes and opportunities for future funding of VCS LSC and other partnership projects, encouraging collaboration, credibility, performing and competitive bidding

The Working Group believes that in order to address the problem of the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training, it was necessary to establish the root cause.

## Methodology

Research was carried out during the Summer of 2007, and this report drafted in September 2007, by Supporting Contemporary Adolescence.

The research consisted of a variety of questionnaires (updated throughout the research to expand questions to capture more detailed information) and interviews (see the Results sections for details) with both young people and 'Service Providers'.

## Questionnaire Results: Service Providers

Questionnaires and interviews have been carried out and distributed to service providers carried out by the staff of Connexions, SCA, E2E, and the YMCA to investigate the opportunities for young people and how they can be increased to reduce the amount of people who are categorised as being NEET, or who are at risk of becoming NEET.

The results of the questions are as follows:

### 1) Are you aware that the current term NEET is presently changing to NET (Not in Education or Training)? Are you aware of the reasons for the change?

Only 10 per cent of the members of staff/ service providers that took part in the questionnaire/ interviews had heard of or were aware of the change through research of their own staff. Other members of staff such as those from Connexions, had linked the change to growing government concern over education, achievements and the amount of qualifications that are received.

Also it was recognised that an amount of people who are in employment have no qualifications and training, and was suggested that the government target these so it could increase the amount of qualifications and training to improve the employment figures, and could eventually reduce those considered to be NEET people.

Over 80 per cent of the people who took part in the investigation were not aware of the change, which shows a need for service providers to be up to date with government policies and to keep on top of any changes that occur, so that opportunities provided for young people can be constantly improved.

### 2a.) Would you consider the influences outside of school to be an influence in the performance of academic or other achievements of young people?

All of the participants considered outside influences to have made an impact on academic or other achievements. The majority of these being the support received from the families friends, as well as other factors in the social environment.

Influences included those who receive little or no support before, during and after they finish school; young people who live in rural areas who have no activities available to them before or after school to keep them amused in the evenings and during the holidays.

The years prior to mainstream education were also targeted as being an important part to learning ability, such as early year's education- more children being supported in pre-schools. Another influence was with the presence of gangs and peer pressure, as well as the impact of the different cultural groups in the communities.

A suggestion, was made to target young people from the age of 11- 16 years of age to give them support and structure during and early on into secondary education, so they could receive training earlier in their life and gain the support and advice they need for later on in their employment.

Nick Mayo, of the YMCA, referred to a programme of Pastoral Care, a Government run initiative about 10 years ago when outside agencies, such as the YMCA, were invited into schools to work with the students and their parents/carers having been identified by the school as at potential high risk to find themselves falling into the then undefined term "NEET".

**2b.) Can you suggest any activities that you consider to be helpful for young people to develop opportunities for them to reach higher achievements at school? i.e. after school activities, youth clubs, etc**

The activities that were suggested to promote high achievement was with youth groups, employment opportunities such as work experience/ volunteering, sports clubs and other after school clubs and activities.

It was considered to be important that in these clubs and groups that there should be positive role models amongst the group leaders as in some cases these people so make a difference in their lives and do provide some sort of stability and structure for them that they may not receive elsewhere.

It was also suggested that other activities should be provided to those in the lower income bracket, such as extra tuition for those who want to learn but whose families do not have the income to be able to afford it.

Communication and building teamwork is also an important factor to produce positive outcomes which can lead to higher achievements in education, employment and training. Also with these different activities it gives young people a chance to meet new people and take part in different experiences they may encounter later on in life.

**3) In your opinion do you consider schools to recognise and focus enough attention on those who may be at risk of becoming NEET people in the future? (Examples of ideas for improvement may be given)**

This question received many alternatives for schools recognising those at risk of becoming NEET people in the future, the main issue lying with the parents for helping the young people at home, e.g. there may be problems at home which would fuel the attitudes of the young people towards resenting and rebelling against school life and the set structure which would cause problems in training and employment.

Another reason is the problem of money being reduced in schools so that those at risk of becoming NEET or those who need additional help and support are ignored and the focus being more on those who achieve higher.

On the housing front, Nick Mayo, attributed a change of partner in parental relationships, territorial readjustments within the domestic home, as being one of the main contributory factors to YP leaving home, sofa friends between friends before finding themselves at the YMCA. He commented that parents only too pleased to have the "difficult to manage YP off-their-hands," yet safely accommodated at the YMCA, would throw money at the YP servicing their immediate needs for new clothes or giving 30 quid to go out on a Friday night. Parents are thereby cushioning some swiftly acquired lazy habits to drop-out of college or lose interest in job hunting.

As a main priority, relationships need to be consistent between the schools and the parents to assess the progress and achievement of the young people who have already been identified as a possibility for becoming NEET, and needs to be followed up; individual targets for achievements could be set to improve the young person's opportunities and achievements.

It was also recognised that more needed to be done for the individual young person, to take their interests and their own targets for achievements into consideration. It was suggested that well trained staff in schools need to be able to intervene and understand the needs of the individual pupils, and should be able to help and interact with their individual goals.

**4) Low educational achievement has been targeted at those who did not receive correct or enough help and support in the early years of their education. If more individual or group guidance and support was given in earlier education, do you think more young people would achieve higher in education and or employment and reduce the amount of NEET young people?**

Relationships built up earlier in education with pupils are considered important, as is the continued support throughout their education or training so they can receive stability from their peers that way. Support for the parents as well is also a key issue so they can be given guidance to try and help the young person at home.

As young people's needs do need to be considered, it was identified that more practical based activities need to be available as some young people cannot reach their full potential on paper, so more practical skills need to be applied in education and training.

**5) The government has realised the importance of reducing the amount of NEET people in the country with an aim of promoting high achievement in education and employment within the counties. In what ways do you think the local government could improve and increase opportunities, to reduce the amount of NEET people in your area?**

Most of the participants suggested the increase for work experience/ work placements to be increased, which would increase the interest and encourage young people into employment creating job interests. More apprenticeships and more college places to be made available for young people, maybe as an alternative to school work more practical work could be given to help them prepare for and to gain apprenticeships.

To address the imbalance of vocational and academic achievement, to encourage employers of both the private and public sector to realise the advantage of vocational training, which could as a result improve both sides for the employer, in ways of funding and financial incentives, and for the young person so they do not become NEET.

Perhaps more projects need to be built up around the E2E, Enterprise, at the West Suffolk College and Princes Trust programmes or least ensure a safer transition from the end of the project to securing employment. The government could also introduce an incentive for those who think they can earn more from the benefits system than from employment, as some people feel it is more beneficial for them to claim benefits so place little priority on educational achievement.

Nick Mayo said that YP score accommodation points if they are engaged in training or further education. This amounts to preference grading in the main council housing assessment and allocation. However this is not really incentive enough for many Young People. Most YP, girls only, would find it easier to become pregnant in order to achieve independent living accommodation. Another idea opportunities within youth groups and clubs, for more facilities to be provided, so that young people can gain confidence to prepare them for training and employment, and for them to give and receive respect.

Local transport may be an issue in some areas, especially rural parts of the counties, as youth clubs and activities need to be available to every young person to widen their perspective of achieving in either education, employment or training, so to increase the opportunities available to them. Also as in some areas the availability of youth clubs or youth organisations is scarce, the government could do more to encourage adults or even young people themselves to volunteers to help to organise activities to run clubs or to act as mentors.

## Questionnaire/Interview Results: Young People

To help with the investigation for developing opportunities for young people in the area, 25 young people from organisations such as Connexions, Sca, and the Young Mum's housing association at Acorn House, had taken part in the questionnaires as well as discussions of what they would like to be available to them, with regard to gaining help and advice for continuing with their education and training, or so they can gain advice and see how they can address their career and employment goals.

A first questionnaire was carried out by young people, although we found that it did not gather enough information from the young people, so another questionnaire was formed with additional and more direct questions as some of the young people were reluctant to enlighten upon their answers.

The results to the questionnaires are as follows:

### 1) Ages of the participants

16 per cent of the young people that took part in the questionnaires and interviews were in the 13-15 years age bracket, 36 per cent were in the 15-18 age brackets, 44 per cent were between 18-21 years old, and 4 per cent were 21-25 years of age.

For the following questions the results will be shown for each of the three individual age groups so that distinctions can be made as to what the young people of the different ages want, and what appeals to them.

### 2) Are you engaged in:

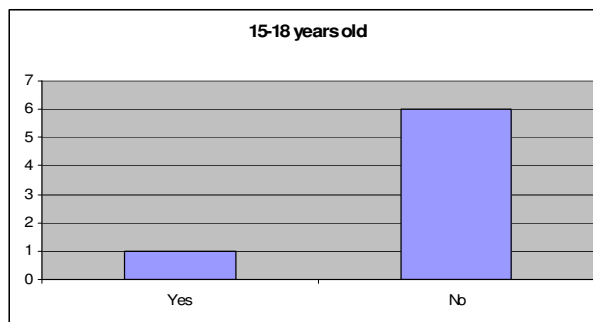
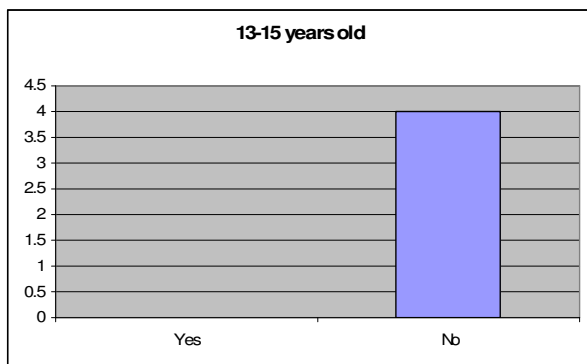
Age Group	Education	Employment	Training	All	None	Other
13-15	3	0	0	0	1	0
15-18	2	4	3	0	1	0
18-21	1	4	0	0	6	0
21-25	0	1	0	0	0	0

### 3) If you chose 'None' then why is this?

Age Group	Can't be bothered	Not interested	Started but gave up	Other (please specify)
13-15		1		
15-18	1			
18-21				3

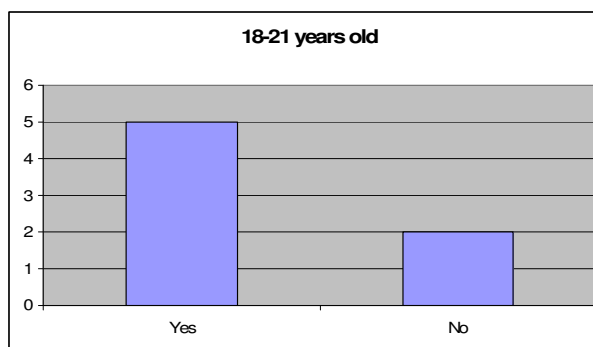
The reasons for 'Other' were given as 'looking for work' and 'can't find a job'. This shows that more advice could be given to young people to help and support them to realise what they want to do after or instead of education, and to guide them into what to do as regards for employment.

#### 4) Have you engaged in a training scheme/course before?



Those that had answered 'Yes' to have taken a course or training scheme, were then asked to specify if they completed it, gave up, if they lost interest or if they had expense issues.

It appeared in the 18-21 age range, that 3 young people out of the 5 who had engaged in some sort of course/ training had completed it, however the others had not.



When the young people of Connexions had been interviewed those who had not completed their course has suggested that they did not receive enough, or the right guidance and support towards their studies or training.

Another idea that had come up in discussion with young people at Connexions, was that they would find it beneficial to have a structured careers advice earlier on in secondary school, such as from the age of Year Nine, not just at Year Ten or Eleven.

Others who had not taken a course or undergone training had suggested that in some cases the expense of the course had prevented them from perusing it and so made them 'not be bothered' about finding any alternative studies or employment.

Therefore from this study we can already develop a picture of how the young people of today can be easily unmotivated into finding a job, to either complete or extend their secondary education, and to explore the different opportunities that are available to them such as training courses, or apprenticeships.

#### 5) Do you have any future aspirations or career interests?

Two of the four people from the 13-15 age range who attend Sca, both identified their future aspirations as having a career in music and singing, the other two stated that they did not have any.

On the other hand some of the young people from 15- 18 age group were more aware of what they would want to do as a possible career in the future, five of the nine people had aspirations.

Those out of the Connexions group had specified that they would be interested in becoming involved on courses such as plumbing, photography, music; and those at the young mums association had specified that they would be interested in other courses leading to a career in catering.

Some of the young people in the 18-21 had shown interest in careers such as mechanics, the electrical and building trade, as well as fitness training/ instructing and music. Another young person from the young mum's association was interested in admin work for a possible job in the future.

However in this age group there were also five young people, three of them being young mums, who did not have any ideas or aspirations of what they would like to do as a possible career in the future.

Therefore as some of the young people did not have any idea of what they would want to do in the future, after or in place of their education, it can be considered that from an earlier age, it could be considered that possibly more support, or a structure could be in place for the young people, which would help them to decide where they want to do for their careers, in education, employment or training.

Sue McClean, manager at Acorn House for Young Mum's, said that it would be useful for courses to be available for the young mothers in the area so they can develop their opportunities in employment, to help them to break away from the benefit system and move on making a new life for them and their family.

Although she claimed that some of the young mothers who survived on benefits would not in fact benefit from engaging in a course for possible later employment, as after the age of 19, education/ colleges courses are to be paid for and are expensive when the young person has to rely on benefits for a means to live.

This scenario also ties in with what Nick Mayo, from the YMCA, had said previously that claiming for benefits outweighs the need for looking for employment as the benefit money is reduced.

One of the additional questions that was added in the second questionnaire, asked if the young persons home life had an effect on their ability to make plans for a future career. (However these were only given out to young people at Connexions and Sca as the previous questionnaires had been given out to those at Acorn House.)

Two of the young people that were between 13-15 years of age from Sca, had identified that their home life did have an impact on their plans for a future career, one of them stating that it was difficult for them to gain transport as they lived in 'the middle of nowhere', so there means of transport would have to be considered before anything else.

In addition to this another question was added which asked the young person if they received enough support/ encouragement from their family/ school/ tutors.

A young person in the 13-15 age range from Sca, had suggested that they did not receive enough, and would like to be helped to be 'understood' by her peers. On the other hand the young people from Connexions in the 15-18 age range had specified that they do receive enough support from their peers, which could give an indication that compared with the younger age groups, that there is more available to them in the ways of advice and guidance.

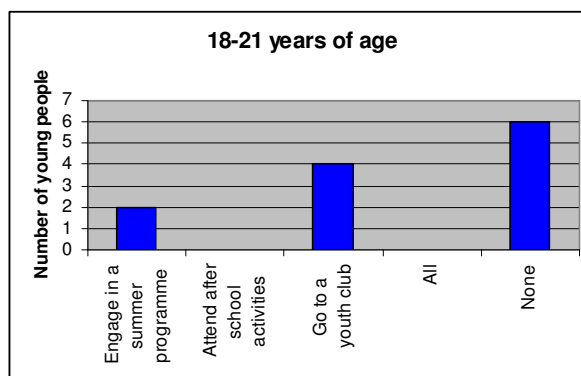
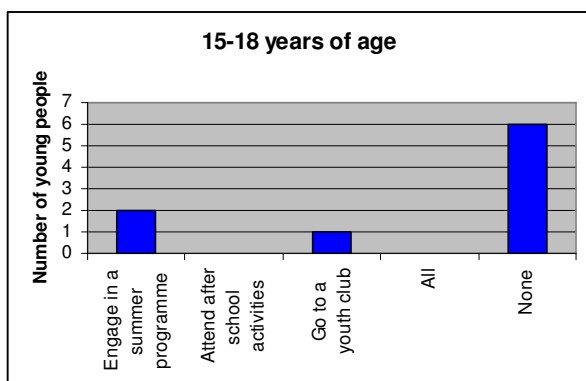
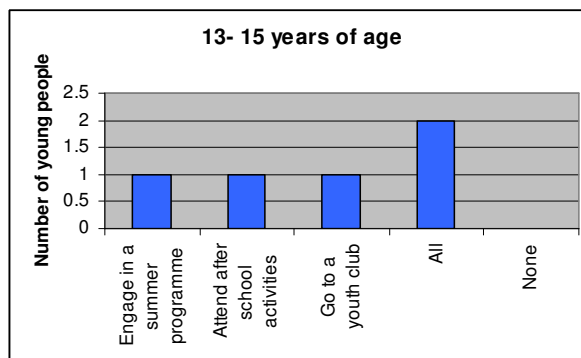
When the same question was asked to young people between the age range of 18-21, they answered that they too also did receive a fair amount of help and support, however it was not as intense as when they were approaching the end of secondary school.

Although when discussed what could be improved they had suggested that there could be an increase in mentoring from young people themselves who had gone through the same experiences, and who had previously had to make the same decisions themselves.

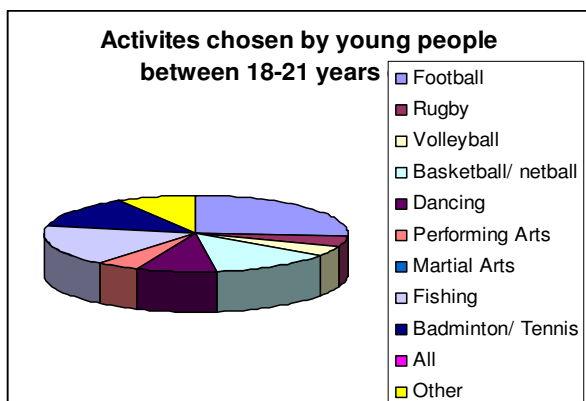
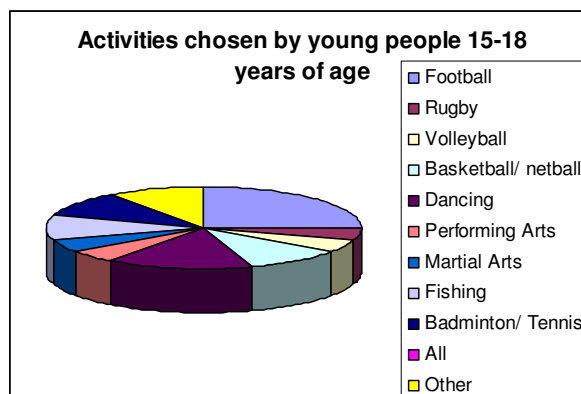
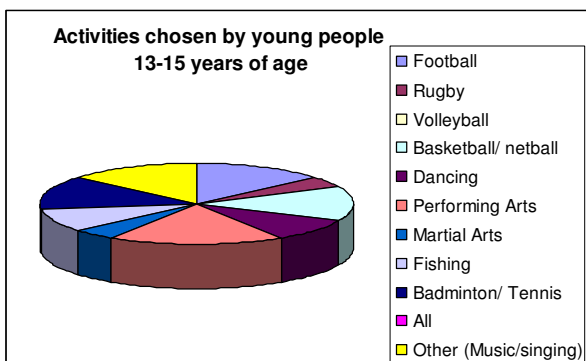
### 8) What opportunities would you like there to be available to young people in your area?

If given the opportunity would you:

- Engage in a Summer programme
- Attend after school activities
- Go to a Youth Club
- All
- None



### 9) What activities do you like to take part in:



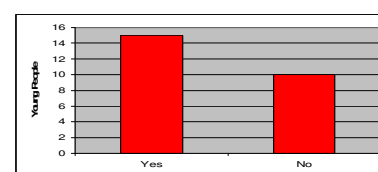
The 'other' examples the young people gave that they would like to do was either none of the above choices, music, or extreme sports (wake boarding, skiing).

**10) Roughly how much money do you spend a week on hobbies, activities, and/or socialising:**

Age	Nothing	£1 - £5	£5 - £10	£10 - £15	£20 or more
13-15	1	0	3	0	0
15-18	2	0	2	1	4
18-21	3	2	1	1	4
21-25	0	0	1	0	0

**11) If there were activities provided by an organisation in your area either throughout the summer, or after school in youth club, would you attend them?**

For this graph the results from all of the age groups were added together to show the amount of young people as a whole, if they would attend activities provided for them by an organisation.



**12) Opportunities and training that young people would find beneficial or helpful, or would like to gain an achievement in, and/or would be interested in and would like to find out about more.**

Activities	What the young people would take part in		
	(13-15)	(15-18)	(18-21)
First Aid	1	3	3
Health and Safety	1	3	4
Food preparation and Hygiene	2	0	5
Mechanics	0	2	2
Brick-work	1	2	3
Woodwork/Carpentry	1	1	2
Gardening/Landscaping	0	1	1
Art and Design	2	2	1
Textiles and Fashion	1	2	1
Music and Media	2	2	3
Communication skills	2	1	3
ICT skills	2	1	3
All	0	0	0
Other	0	2	1
None/Not interested	0	1	1

## Recommendations

On consideration of the findings of this report we would suggest the following recommendations:

- Early intervention within schools targeting a younger age (Year 8/9) Young People identified to become NEET, who will receive additional support through mentors or PA's, in tandem with parental/carer pastoral support, on how to avoid early drop-out patches into NEET.
- General awareness education in schools to warn Young People to the realities of NEET life and future hardship to break out of it.
- An aspirational push to attract Young People to vocational training. Overcome the negative word associations attached with 'Vocational' training.
- To run more and invest more into the rural community evening Youth Clubs to be supported with the capacity, through additional training, to work with NEET Young People from which to run training, volunteering for under 16 year olds.
- Greater incentives for Young People to engage through a system to award points for engaging into education, employment or training.
- Offer financial assistance with transport to training courses or employment places for Young People.
- More opportunities for work-practice placements for volunteering especially apprenticeships. Identify companies/organisations who will take on a regular basis take on NEET Young People.
- Support to housing associations to deliver training from their premises.
- Bite size varied chunks of (flexible learning and short-term time commitment) training accreditation to achieve in small steps and then bolt on to with other similar bite-size, achievable qualifications.
- Better signposting through publicity and practical advice in the Benefits Office, CAB to push towards training opportunities and the award scheme.