

Prince's Trust Cymru response to:

Delivering Skills That Work for Wales Reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training in Wales

The Prince's Trust supports the aims for re-engaging young people who become NEET. The young people we work with often face complex challenges which put them at a disadvantage, for example those leaving care or in custody. It is important that any accredited learning they undertake helps them towards recognised and transferable qualifications.

Our responses to your specific questions are:-

1. Do you welcome the broad policy direction set out in this document?

The Prince's Trust welcomes the increased focus on those young people who become NEET, and we are broadly in favour of the policy direction. However we would welcome greater clarity on the role of the Third Sector in Young People's Partnerships, and how the sector, and The Prince's Trust, can share their knowledge and expertise of engaging with this group of young people and successfully managing their transition into employment or further education and training. We would also welcome being involved in any policy discussions to ensure that existing work with this group is not lost through any unintended consequences of these proposals.

The Prince's Trust believes that all young people have potential and talent and should be encouraged and supported to work towards qualifications. However, in the minority of cases and where it is clear they will not achieve certain qualifications, they should not be set up to fail and their talents should be channelled more practically (e.g. employment and apprenticeships). We are concerned that by forcing young people to try and achieve qualifications we could, in the process, de-motivate and discourage them from participation.

In addition, if these proposals dictate the criteria of funding streams, there is the danger of resource being directed away from those programmes (and their content) which re-engage young people with learning i.e. pre-qualification. This essential, often intensive work with socially excluded young people is a pre-requisite for ensuring more young people are able to tackle formal qualifications.

2. What should be the priority actions if we are to deliver in line with our ambitions for reducing the proportion of young people NEET?

Although it is clear that the proposals are designed to tackle this problem in the long-term, we should not lose sight of the fact that the most cost-efficient way to reduce the numbers of NEET young people is to fund those projects which have a proven track record of successfully supporting young people. For example, in 2007/08 The Prince's Trust supported over 5,000 young people on its Team programme in over 300 different locations. Of these, 3 in 4, or 3,750, progressed into education, employment and training. The priority, as well as delivering the longer term aims, should clearly be to ensure that those programmes which are already working are maintained and built upon in the future, and used as examples to set policy direction.

These strategies must also link closely with strategies and provision aimed at those aged 14-16 and younger, such as The Prince's Trust's very successful xl clubs, run in schools, which tackle those at risk of becoming NEET and ensure that they are supported at the earliest stage possible to minimise the risk of joining the NEET group.

Finally, we must not place too much pressure on young people to achieve lengthy qualifications or enter employment straight away. Support for shorter, targeted engagement of the hardest to reach young people, such as that provided by The Prince's Trust's Get Started programme, can be a less daunting prospect and more likely to encourage continued participation. Get Started encourages young people to participate for short periods (at least five days) and is a stepping stone to participation for those furthest removed from the mainstream.

3. Is there anything missing from our analysis of young NEET (see Chapter 1) which should help to direct our future policies?

The Prince's Trust "Reaching the Hardest to Reach" Research Document has concluded the aims and aspirations of disadvantaged young people are very similar to those not considered disadvantaged (Control Group). They wanted to have a family, an interesting job, and sufficient money to support their lifestyle. Beyond this, they wanted to have a nice home, the ability to make their own choices about their life, and to have friends. However, for many of the disadvantaged young people, there was a lack of understanding as to how they would achieve their aims in life.

This research also found that a lack of qualifications, and to a lesser extent vocational experience, were the primary barriers to achieving their aspirations, regardless of circumstances. Sixty-one percent of the disadvantaged group lacked any qualifications, compared with 28% of the Control Group.

A lack of qualifications was stated as an obstacle for

- 44% of males aged 22-25
- 50% of those leaving care
- 46% of unemployed
- 41% of all disadvantaged young people.

The Prince's Trust has prepared several research documents on this and related subjects which we would happily share with the Welsh Assembly Government if you so wish.

4. What are your views on the systems we outline in chapter 2? In particular

a. Should one organisation have lead responsibility at operational level for young people who are NEET? If so, what should this mean in practice?

It makes practical sense to have one organisation having the lead responsibility and accountability for NEET young people. This organisation needs to be informed by not only the KIT processes and Young People's Partnerships, but by all organisations working with this group within the given area.

However, we also believe that it is important that the availability of qualifications is not restricted by age related funding. The Trust believes that the split created by WAG policies between pre and post 19 provision places additional barriers to learning on vulnerable individuals already disengaged and disillusioned with the

education system. We strongly believe that a young person should receive support defined by the stage they are at in their education, rather than by their age. Ultimately, an artificial age barrier could result in some young people missing out on achieving valuable qualifications (Please also see our response to the Raising Expectations Consultation, June 2008). The Prince's Trust would recommend that exceptions be made at age 19 for all young people facing difficult transitions to adulthood.

b. What more can we do to embed KIT processes within local authorities

We do not feel qualified to comment on these local authority processes; however we would like to draw your attention to the conclusions on young people's attitudes towards data collection drawn from our recent research document entitled Reaching the Hardest to Reach.

Sensitive issues

Disadvantaged young people were more reticent than their mainstream peers about matters relating to sensitive issues such as sexual orientation, sexual health and experience of abuse. More than a quarter of all disadvantaged young people would never give information regarding sexual health, sexual orientation, and experience of abuse. A further quarter said they would only share information on these issues with someone that they knew and trusted.

Accurate assessment

Only 45 per cent of socially excluded young people said that they would complete all questions truthfully when providing personal details. Thirty-one per cent said that they would leave out questions they are unsure about. Twenty-three per cent claimed that they would lie if the true answer would cause them additional difficulties or to make them sound better.

Confidentiality

Young people do not fully understand the concept of confidentiality, with many confused about the legal requirements imposed by child protection legislation. Sixty-eight per cent of disadvantaged young people incorrectly believed that if information is confidential, it can go no further. Young people will only divulge personal information, provided that they understand why it is needed and how it will be used. The intended use of personal information must be made explicitly clear to young people who, depending on their background, may have difficulty understanding complex data protection clauses. Young people also felt that, where possible, they should be able to speak to the same person each time they come in contact with a support organisation. It is important that support workers are recruited from the local community and that they understand and emphasise with the grass roots issues affecting the area. This role may be best fulfilled by a mentor.

Mobility

Disadvantaged young people are a more mobile group than their mainstream peers. Forty-three per cent of disadvantaged 18-25 year olds have been at their current address for less than a year. A further 20 per cent have been at their address for less than three years.

c. Would there be value in enhancing the information provided to schools on the destinations of former pupils

No answer

d. What more can we do to support information sharing between organisations?

No answer

5. What are your views on the provision for learners that we outline in Chapter 3? In particular

a. what more can we do to support 14-19 Networks in developing learning provision for NEET and at-risk young people.

The proposed system is likely to better inform 14-19 Networks of the needs of NEET and at-risk young people, due to closer working links between the majority of relevant bodies and organisations. It is vital that this is complemented with the networks having a strong understanding of learning provision which is already available and proven to meet these needs. The Prince's Trust are happy to offer support in understanding the needs of this target group and how provision can be successfully developed to meet these needs.

b. How can we best direct Cymorth Theme E in future?

We welcome the renewed focus on the Third Sector of funding through Cymorth Theme E and hope that this will enable The Prince's Trust to help more young people out of the NEET group as a result.

c. Do the proposals go far enough in outlining the changes to our national training programmes? If not what more do we need to do to improve the quality of those programmes for vulnerable young people?

The proposals, including the broadening of the offer under Skill Build to include further support and a wider qualification offer, are positive moves for young people. There are two key things which need to underpin this. Firstly, that no pressures of time are placed upon young people in achieving / progressing, to ensure that they are not engaged and then lost to the system again, but instead helped through a programme which is challenging but without being daunting. And secondly, that the age of the young person does not become a barrier to receiving help or funding. Many individuals, particularly those with more challenging and multiple issues or barriers to learning, will need support beyond the age of 19 and it is vital that this is not denied to those young people - "stage not age".

6. What are your views on the support for learners that we outline in Chapter 4? In particular:-

Our experience is that the individual support is critical for young people in the NEET category. Our experience is that this is the most difficult way to fund, and as such the Prince's Trust welcomes the emphasis on individual support.

a. What more can we do to develop the Support for Learners element of Learning Pathways 14-19 for the benefit of NEET and potentially NEET young people?

No answer

b. Is the idea of financial parity across different types of learning for 16-19 year olds a good one?

The Prince's Trust believes that it is important to have this element of parity

c. what more can we do to ensure that learners are not swayed in their choices by unintentional financial incentives or disincentives?

No answer

7. We have provided draft guidance for local data collection at Annex C of this strategy. We would like to know whether:-

a. the two main categories of NEET are helpful to CYPP organisations for their data collections

No answer

b. there be any difficulties in implementing data collection on this basis with organisations

No answer