



WSN Briefing Paper

“Pathways to Success” Strategy to reduce Youth at Risk Remaining in NEET Category

Issued by Department of Employment and Learning

Background:

The Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) is looking to establish a cross-departmental strategy that aims to decrease the number of young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET) by both preventing young people from becoming NEET and re-engaging young people who are already in NEET. DEL recognizes that the strategy must be constructed with consultation from multiple agencies and perspectives due to the heterogeneous make-up of NEET groups.

Policy context:

In July 2010, The Department of Employment and Learning conducted a Scoping Study of young people in the NEET category. The Study gave the Department a better understanding of the youth in NEET. They realized the heterogeneity within the NEET population:

- 46,000 people between the ages 16-24 are in NEET
- In the study of 15,000 NEET youth, they came up with three subcategories of the NEET youth:
 - 16% (2,240) are doing an activity that is not considered education, employment or training, i.e. doing volunteer work for a year.
 - 18% (2,520) have an identifiable barrier, i.e. illness or disability, that inhibits them
 - 66% (9,240) have no identifiable barrier

As a result, DEL decided to establish a broad strategic direction and plan to lower the number of youth in NEET and create preventive measures that would keep youth out of the NEET category. The Assembly Employment and Learning Committee have led an inquiry into the needs of the Northern Ireland NEET population. This briefing represents the strategy as determined by the Committee.

Key aims of this consultation:

The Consultation aims to:

- Gain opinion and perspective from numerous agencies on with the strategy’s effectiveness in alleviating the number of young people NEET
- Seek views cross-departmental, multi-agency approach to help youth at risk of being NEET
- Develop a co-ordinated set of actions to combat the number of young people in the NEET category
- Ensure that the approach is firmly evidence-based and informed by the views of those working closely with NEET or prospective NEET youth
- To gather ideas for counseling, mentorship and training programs that could be most useful for the diverse NEET population
- Collect ideas for more programs or other approaches that may be effective.

Pathways to Success outlined a number of specific objectives and approaches:

Current and planned actions from multiple Departments are categorized the three main strategic objectives—information, intervention, and prevention:

- **Information**, which consists of plans for keeping track of the individuals and the effectiveness of the strategies:
 - DEL will conduct a Youth Cohort Study in Northern Ireland similar to the one conducted in Great Britain
 - Department of Justice (DJ) is reviewing the Youth Justice System and aims to provide information and recommendations about the young people in NEET
- **Intervention**, which includes the projects and tools planned to re-engage those young people in NEET:
 - Youth Works, a three-year programme starting in Spring 2011
 - Department of Education commissioned research about the underlying causes of low attendance by (10% of) post-primary level students
 - DEL will consider developing programmes aimed and providing youth with essential skills, focusing on literacy, numeracy, ICT, and employability requirements
 - DEL established WorkingRite pilot programme, which provides work-based mentoring services to at risk youth
 - DEL established Individual Learner Programme (ILP), which aims to increase retention rates of college students
 - DEL has allocated £1.5 million to support disadvantaged students in higher education
 - DEL has established the “Discovering Queens” programme, a science programme aimed to increase interest in higher learning amongst disadvantaged youth.
 - Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment supports (and will occasionally give grants to) the Invest NI’s Enterprise Development Programme (EDP) to encourage self-employment amongst young people.
 - DJ will continue to fund the Care and Resettlement of Offenders employment scheme
 - Department of Social Development is developing a Volunteering Strategy to expose students to prospective careers through volunteering.
 - OFMdfM will continue to consider existing funding proposals that could positively affect NEET youth.
- **Prevention**, which is aimed at reducing the number of young people most at risk at becoming NEET. It aims to raise aspirations, close the achievement gap, and enhance skills.
 - Raising aspirations/standards: “Every School a Good School” policy
 - Closing achievement gap: many programmes have been established to tackle this: Extended Schools and Full Service School programmes, Pupils’ Emotional Health and Well-being Programme, a program to support school-aged mothers, lead the Sub-group of the Ministerial Sub Committee on Children and Young People.
 - Enhancing skills and dispositions through revised curriculum

Potential pitfalls to what is being suggested:

- The subcategories lack sufficient detail. What is the gender of these youth? What are the ethnicities of the groups? It may be worth mentioning them and investing the unique challenges that youth may face within that.
- Do female youth at risk of NEET have unique set of barriers?
- How can this strategy better assist young women in NEET, especially young mothers?

- The strategy relies too heavily on broadly dispersed strategies that have already occurred or are in the works. By relying on multi-departmental strategies, DEL is not fully taking responsibility for the initiative. While other departmental efforts possibly indirectly affect youth at risk of being NEET, they may not aim to alleviate the issue in a direct manner.
- How will the DEL collate the information and resources from all the Departments to ensure it is being most effective? The various departments must be dedicated to working together with as little overlap yet as few gaps as possible.
- The Committee is currently uncertain as to how many NEETs will be able to take advantage of existing funding
- What about young people whose parents have mental health/drug/alcohol problems or where domestic violence is an issue?
- Age focus of 16-19 may be too narrow?

Next Steps:

WSN will be organizing focus groups to ensure the views of women are fed into this consultation. Further details to follow.

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Focus Group Questions:

Question 1:

What barriers do you think young women face with regards to education, employment and training?

Question 2:

What do you think can be done to support young women to overcome these barriers?

Question 3:

What support do you think parents need to ensure their children do not fall in to the NEET category?

Question 4:

What role do you think the women's centres can play to ensure young women do not fall in to the NEET category?