

YOUTH tracker

Issue 4, Summer 2010

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

Welcome to the fourth edition of *Youth Tracker*, the quarterly newsletter looking at how Britain's young people are faring in the recession and recovery, and what can be done to support them.

August brings the prospect of exam results and young people having to decide on their next steps in life. This edition of *Youth Tracker* focuses on what we can do to put these young people at the forefront of education and skills policy.

We look at what surveys tell us about why some people disengage from school, and analyse the latest labour market statistics to understand which young people are at greatest risk of being out of work or training. John Hayes MP, Minister with joint responsibilities in both the Department for Education and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, sets out the coalition government's plans to support young people as they start their careers.

Of course, it's what happens on the ground that really makes a difference. That's why we open this edition with an interview with a 19-year-old man who is trying to change things in his local area, and include stories from some of Private Equity Foundation's past and present portfolio charities to understand what is going on in our communities.



Kate Stanley, deputy director, ippr



Shaks Ghosh, chief executive,
Private Equity Foundation



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Empowering young people to reach their full potential

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www.privateequityfoundation.org



By youth, for youth

ippr's **Jonathan Clifton** travelled to Reading to hear how one of the UK's many young people classed as 'Neet', is taking matters into his own hands

'People will come and start the course and they'll be like a brick – they won't want to do anything, they won't say anything, they might not want to even be there. The technique is not to chip away at the brick – cuddle them and pamper them and crap like that – it's to smash the brick.'

I almost did a double-take. This wasn't a retired army major telling me about his approach to working with so-called 'Neet' young people (those not in education, employment or training): it was an unemployed 19-year-old who left school at sixteen. Fed up with the way such young people are treated by the system, Mike Crone has decided to try to do something about it himself. 'It's like a therapy academy but they don't realise it. When you need a cuddle we'll give you a cuddle, but when you need a kick up the backside we'll kick you hard.'

I went to Reading to meet Mike, himself one of the 900,000 young people that are out of employment, education or training in Britain, and Oli Grey who works for the youth charity BACYP. Together they are setting up a project called Base, which will provide

emotional support to young people in Reading and help them build up essential skills that they might be lacking.

The idea for Base came to Mike in April when he was chatting to staff and friends at his local Connexions service. It aims to fill in the gaps in the current system that he has spotted first-hand. 'In any system there's going to be gaps', Oli explains, 'and the gaps we see are for the young people who don't do particularly well in school, but who aren't the ones with particular learning difficulties either.'

"The gaps we see are for the young people who don't do particularly well in school, but who aren't the ones with particular learning difficulties either"

These young people's problems are mild enough that they do not register with the authorities as requiring specialist help. Nevertheless, they end up leaving school with few qualifications, no work experience, and, often, an unsupportive home life. It is these people who fall through the gaps in the system and it is these gaps that Base is trying to fill.

Changing attitudes

The main way Base plans to fill these gaps is by providing emotional support. They hope to get participants doing a series of what seem like ordinary tasks, but that are designed to help them get over barriers such as low confidence,

fear of opening up and having narrow horizons. These are the barriers that have to be overcome before more structured training sessions and support programmes can be effective. If a person doesn't think there is value in education and training, or they don't think they have the ability to find a job, then no amount of training courses will help them. While the current system is quite good at providing practical training sessions for things like writing a CV, in the view of Mike and Oli it tends to fall at this more basic hurdle.

Much of our conversation focuses on this issue of changing cultures and attitudes among 'Neet' young people. 'Cultures do build up. People who are frustrated stick to groups they know – it's a clan mentality. If you spend all of your time with the same people in the same area in the same town, you start to accept the things you see as being the reality.' Mike becomes quite animated when talking about young people's apathy, the fact they accept their situation as 'just the way it is'. 'That's one of the key things we need to break down', he tells me.

At one level Base will do this gently, by mixing different groups of people just to show them that there are other paths they can choose, other walks of life out there. But, he explains, there is a tough-love element to this too: 'we'll ask them "what have you done recently to improve your own life?" And then they'll have the answers right in front of them. You know, if they are complaining they are unemployed but haven't put in any job applications, how can they expect to have a job when they've stopped at the first hurdle?'



“This is not just about helping young people to find a job, education, or training. It is about them finding a place to belong, a place in society as a whole”



Academic research supports this focus on tackling perceptions about education, work and people’s horizons. Anne Green from the University of Warwick has used ‘mental maps’ to demonstrate how the place people live in is important in shaping their experience of the labour market – as it affects what opportunities they see and how they interpret and act on the information available to them.

“The place people live in is important in shaping their experience of the labour market”

But identifying the importance of cultures and perceptions is surely the easy task. Changing them is quite a different story. And this is where Base’s approach is so innovative. Its tag line is ‘by youth, for youth’ and the emphasis is on peer-to-peer support. The aim is to get the participants to recruit other people to take part, and to set their own curriculum and decide what they most need help with, and eventually to help lead it. ‘The idea is that the people

going through the first pilot get offered the chance to become the leaders for the next sessions’, says Oli. The benefits of this approach are clear – the participants are treated like adults, with valid opinions and skills that they can contribute to the session. By letting

them contribute in this way it can give them a sense of ownership and responsibility and build their self-esteem. It is also likely to be a far more effective

way of embedding change through peer-to-peer networks, rather than trying to force it on them from the top.

Criticisms of the education system

Our conversation moves on to education and the ideas start pouring out: shifting from exams to ongoing assessment; tailoring syllabuses for each individual; making lessons more like

workshops; more mixing with adults. At one point Oli is halfway through explaining that Pupil Referral Units are for those who get excluded from school when he is interrupted by Mike who has a grin on his face: ‘I know, I’ve been in a couple’. Interestingly, he sings their praises: ‘they do work – the teaching techniques are so much better. They work because they treat you like an adult. It’s not like in school where the mentality of the teachers is that “you’re so much lower than me”.’

Oli and Mike’s main criticism of the education system is that it is very one dimensional. They complain about a lack of options for those who don’t want to go the traditional route. ‘There’s a lot of stigma.... If you’re not A-levels-university-job then you’re not a youth’, says Mike.

This last comment contained a much more troubling undertone than anything we had discussed before. It was becoming clear that this is not just about helping young people to find a job, education, or training. It is about them finding a place to belong, a place in society as a whole. ‘Society is not welcoming of us’, Mike complained. For those that do not fit into the traditional model of university education ‘there’s no microphone, no speaker, we’re not heard at all’.

Base is being piloted in Reading as a ‘peer-led’ project where young people who are Neet can support each other. Contact details for the project can be requested from j.clifton@ippr.org

EXPERT INSIGHT

NatCen's **Andy Ross** explains what leads some young people to disengage from education

It is estimated that between one fifth and one third of all young people aged 14–16 are disengaged from education. Using data from the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE) – a nationally representative study following the lives of young people as they complete their secondary education and beyond – we are able to get a better understanding of the kinds of young people who are most likely to disengage, the age at which they do so as well as the some of the factors that help or hinder young people's engagement with education.

The study identifies different 'types' of engaged or disengaged young people based on a combination of their attitudes, behaviour and motivations. For example, about a quarter of young people disliked school but nevertheless remained committed to education in the longer term, achieving almost as well as their engaged peers. However, one group stood out as being a particular cause for concern. About a fifth of young people were far less committed to education, much more likely to play truant and had especially poor attitudes to school. Over a quarter of these 'disengaged' young people were 'Neet' the following year.

Catch them young

In school Year 9, where the study first began collecting data, the majority of young people were already either engaged or disengaged and remained in the same state for the rest of their



compulsory schooling. Therefore, strategies aimed at improving young people's engagement should really begin before this time.

Nevertheless, there appears to be a further,

perhaps 'critical point' in the transition between Years 9 and 10 during which a significant number of young people disengage. This is the point at which young people start their GCSE qualifications, a period associated with increased workload, but also perhaps for some a period associated with increased anxiety over the recognition that work now counts towards final qualifications.

Who disengages?

Looking more closely at the kinds of young people who are most likely to disengage, the study supports a lot of previous research in this area that

shows those at greatest risk of disengaging tend to be white males from disadvantaged backgrounds. When considering issues relating to the gap in attainment it is therefore important to also address the 'gap in engagement' and ensure that these young people continue to see the relevance in and remain committed to their education. There were also a number of other factors associated with young people's disengagement including experiences of bullying in school, the quality of the relationships that young people had with their teachers as well as the general culture in relation to truancy within each school.

Keeping young people interested

On a more positive note the study highlights some potential strategies that might serve to improve levels of engagement. For example, where there was evidence of a positive relationship between schools and young people's

parents these same young people were more likely to be engaged, which suggests that strategies aimed at

"Strategies aimed at getting more schools working with parents might be one way to improve levels of engagement"

getting more schools working with parents might be one way to improve levels of engagement.

Another strategy lies in ensuring that getting a good education remains relevant to the lives of young people.



For disengaged young people having a job that paid well was held in particularly high esteem, more so than by other young people, yet at the same time the former were far less likely to recognise the importance of education in achieving this aim. A qualitative study, also carried out at NatCen, found that quite often disengaged young people expressed regret later on at not having understood that a minimum number of GCSEs were required for most college courses, work-based learning settings, and 'decent jobs'. This information needs to be communicated to young people early, before Year 9, and more importantly in a manner that is relevant to them, perhaps by focusing on their long-term earning capacity.

Disengaged young people were more likely to enjoy and have confidence in studying ICT (Information and Communication Technology) than other subjects, suggesting that the broadening of the school curriculum giving young people more opportunities to study vocational type qualifications might be another way to improve levels of engagement. Finally, there was also evidence that parental and teacher supervision of homework, and having extracurricular activity and study support on offer, may also play a positive role.

Andy Ross is Research Director, Children and Young People, at NatCen. Details of his research can be found at www.natcen.ac.uk/study/disengagement-from-education-among-14-16-year-olds

Challenging the curriculum

Sarah Gracey outlines four changes to schools and the curriculum that could help tackle the 'Neet' problem

1. The curriculum

The curriculum at age 14 still does not offer sufficient flexibility. There are not enough options for varied courses and hands-on learning for those who are disengaged from school or undecided about their options.

Programmes allowing 14 year olds to step out of a schools-based national curriculum for a year and experience a range of taster courses and practical learning, alongside key skills training, have been hugely successful in improving attitude and retention. Youngsters at risk of disengaging should have this 'year out' option available at age 14.

2. Flexibility

Progression routes need to make it easier to change tack, re-skill and pursue different qualifications, not just to help 'disengaged' or 'undecided' learners find what is best for them, but also to enable people to re-skill in a changing, flexible economy. It can also help people who have already dropped out of education to re-engage more easily. Skills accounts can be an important tool to enable this flexibility.

3. Careers education and guidance

Careers education and guidance

(CEG) can be unsystematic and of uneven quality. European systems often have structured careers advice from age 12 or 13. Careers guidance needs to begin much earlier in school and be delivered by an independent, professional service.

More imaginative, extensive and structured work experience should be embedded throughout the curriculum and course materials from Year 7 onwards and not just be a two week experience tacked on the end of Year 10 or 11. Technology could be used far more innovatively in developing learning tools connecting schools with places of work.

4. Transition periods

The support available at vital transition points within education needs to be improved. In Year 7, smaller groups, buddy systems with older students, mentoring and intensive catch-up, can all help the transition from primary to secondary school. Transitions from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 and from school to college must also be supported.

We need changes in these four areas to ensure all young people can be inspired and properly supported to make the most of their learning opportunities.

Sarah Gracey is a Policy Analyst at LSN Centre for Innovation in Learning. The Centre's recent report 'Changing the Neet mindset' can be downloaded from www.lsnlearning.org.uk

In focus: Local authorities

On 1 April 2010, local authorities across England were given responsibility for commissioning 16–19 education. Here, **Joe Dromey** explains what the London Borough of Newham has learned about where to focus the services it commissions.

Newham's research, which will inform us as we commission services in the borough, showed that parents were the biggest influence on young people's decisions about courses and careers, followed by teachers and friends. However, there is currently little help available for parents in understanding the pathways available to their children. Much more could be done here to equip parents with the information they need to guide their children's choices.

The research also showed the significance of the Education Maintenance Allowance [see p11]. The majority of young people in receipt of the EMA said it was an important factor in their decision to continue studying. The EMA has been instrumental to increasing participation among poorer students and any move to scrap it must be resisted.

Young people tended to be unaware of the demands of local businesses.

Whereas employers prized employability and 'soft' skills most highly, young people thought technical and managerial skills were more important. They also had a rather limited awareness of the range of jobs and career paths available to them locally. This shows the need for more focused information, advice and guidance, informed by the demands of the local economy.

The research also showed that contact with employers while in education, for example through work experience, helped young people make better, more informed choices. However, most employers we spoke to had no

involvement in education. Whereas those who were engaged reported numerous benefits, those who were not did not see the 'business case' for doing so. Most employers also struggled to comprehend the array of qualifications available.

There seems to be an opportunity to reach out to employers, demonstrating the case for engagement and ensuring they understand the full range of qualifications and courses now available.

Finally, for those who slip through the net and become Neet, the most effective approach for re-engagement involves flexible voluntary sector provision, supported by youth workers, offering small steps of progression.

Joe Dromey is a Senior Policy Officer in the London Borough of Newham. See www.newham.gov.uk/furthereducationresearch

"The Education Maintenance Allowance has been instrumental to increasing participation"

What can c

Volunteer Reading Help

Volunteer Reading Help aims to create a nation of confident children who are literate for life through the sustained support of a trained volunteer reading helper at the child's primary school.

The key to our success is the patience and enthusiasm of our volunteers who help 'sell' reading to a child. The one-to-one nature of the sessions allows us to tailor them to each child's needs and early intervention means a child can go on to secondary school with the reading confidence necessary to succeed.

Are charities in a position to do more? Well, in the case of Volunteer Reading Help, we have been involved in providing services for 37 years and will

"Our only constraint in reaching more children is capacity"

continue to do so. Our aim, of course, is to attract more and more volunteers to engage in this life-changing activity for children. We do not see our role as 'replacing' existing educational services but supplementing them.

Our only constraint in reaching more children is capacity – this year we are helping 20 per cent more than last year but we can only continue to grow where funding is available to both us as a charity and to the schools themselves.

www.vrh.org.uk

Charities do that government can't?

The Place2Be

Place2Be counsellors work in schools to identify and address the cause of emotional and mental health problems, before they have reached a point when a child's development, education and wellbeing are compromised.

Early intervention is central to The Place2Be: counsellors work with children as young as four, as well as their families and teachers. Working inside school, The Place2Be becomes integral to the day-to-day school activity, so there is no stigma attached to using the service.

In terms of whether charities are able to do more, The Place2Be has a tried and tested model that has been honed for over 16 years but, like other charities, it is reliant on funding. The Place2Be has an income made up from schools (25 per cent), companies, trusts and foundations (30 per cent), government (28 per cent) and individuals and training. If The Place2Be is to roll out its service,

Since being elected to office, Prime Minister David Cameron has made an impassioned plea for a 'big society' to replace the 'big state' in providing public services. A key plank of this plan is to increase the number of social enterprises, charities and community groups providing services. Youth Tracker caught up with some leading charities working in education, to find out the key to their success.

We asked these charities if they are well placed to play more of a role, if the Government's aims are realistic, what charities can do that government cannot, and what will need to change to allow charities to play more of a role in tackling the 'Neet' problem.

These organisations clearly have much to offer that central government cannot: niche skills and expertise; local contact and trust with service users; flexibility in response to changing needs; and a freedom from party politics. But the charities are also at pains to point out that they are just as dependent on funding as other service providers – and that budget cutbacks could impact on areas of their service that are commissioned by schools and local authorities.

funding needs to be sustained and increased during these financially challenging times.

In contrast to government, charities are experts in their field and can create direct and personal connections with the people and communities they are

helping, developing positive, long-term relationships built on trust. Charities are cause driven and not affected by party politics.

Charities need both financial support and consistent government policy to tackle the 'neet' problem. It is vital that long-term funding (3–5 years) is provided in order to allow the work to make a difference.

www.theplace2be.org.uk



Volunteer Reading Help assists this young reader with his comprehension

School-Home Support (SHS)

SHS places practitioners in schools to support children and families whatever they are going through. We act as a bridge between school and home.

Charities are often well placed to deliver personal services and have a great track record of reaching people who find it hard to access statutory

WHAT CAN CHARITIES DO THAT GOVERNMENT CAN'T?



An IntoUniversity mentor helps young children

services. However, government has to be very clear why it is asking charities to do the provision – if it is looking for effectiveness, that's great; if it is just looking for a cheap way of getting what was a statutorily provided service there could be disappointment.

“If government is looking for effectiveness, that's great; if it is just looking for a cheap way of getting what was a statutorily provided service there could be disappointment”

What charities do is spot a need and work out how best to tackle it. Because they can generally be light on their feet and innovative, they are able to adjust provision to meet the needs of individuals. It is much harder for statutory services to be able to adapt swiftly to new or changing needs. Charities also tend to be specialists in

what they do, so they have a very good understanding of their client group and develop services to suit; sadly many statutory services are delivered in a specific way that suits the service, not the individual.

Charities also have the added benefit of attracting voluntary income and gaining the support of the general public either financially, through volunteering their time or in raising awareness and campaigning.
www.shs.org.uk

IntoUniversity

IntoUniversity provides 7–18 year olds with a combination of after school support, undergraduate mentors and specially designed study programmes to raise aspiration and attainment. These are delivered in partnership with schools and universities.

The key to our success is that we are an early intervention programme which also

provides pastoral support. Most widening participation programmes begin at secondary school – we start at age seven.

Charities like ours already provide valuable community services and often in more creative and efficient ways than statutory bodies. However, if charities are to be more involved in developing services, there must also be adequate and sustained funding and the underpinning of crucial public services to support charity work.

In terms of what charities can do versus government, locally-based charities such as ours are attuned to the needs of our users and can be responsive to grassroots community needs. Our efficient governance and management structures allow us to respond quickly so that new projects can be launched, if necessary, within a couple of months without having to work through layers of bureaucracy. Charities can also mobilise volunteers both in their management and delivery, adding considerable value. IntoUniversity volunteers contribute over two hundred thousand pounds worth of time to the charity every year. The charity is also able to create innovative partnerships between separate business and education sectors.

If we were in the new government, to help young people flourish we would create a focus on early intervention and prevention. From our experience, much more work needs to happen in the primary school years to avoid problems later on.

www.intouniversity.org

'Neets' in numbers

As we go to press, students up and down the country are anxiously awaiting their exam results. Youth Tracker takes a closer look at which students are at greatest risk of becoming 'neet'.

Newspaper headlines have tended to focus on the shocking numbers of graduates now facing unemployment – with fears of disillusioned graduates unable to find work despite having good qualifications.

But ippr's analysis of the Labour Force Survey shows that this is missing the bigger picture. While it is true that graduates have seen the fastest increase in the numbers becoming 'Neet' over the last few years, their overall risk of becoming 'Neet' is still much lower than for their contemporaries with no or low levels of qualifications; it is this latter group that still runs by far the biggest risk of becoming 'Neet'.

Some of the key statistics are:

- Young people with degrees have seen a sharp increase in their risk of becoming 'Neet' since the recession began. Their risk has increased by 50 per cent since the onset of recession.
- However, the total proportion of people with degrees that become 'Neet' remains one of the lowest of any group – with 11.4 per cent being 'Neet' in the first quarter of 2010.
- In contrast, the proportion of young people with no qualifications that become 'Neet' is 36.1 per cent.
- The proportion of young people with low level (level 2) qualifications is 16.1 per cent –

Table 1: Risk of becoming 'Neet' by highest level of qualification (%), 16–24 year olds

	Q1 2008	Q1 2010	PP Change	% Change
Degree	7.5	11.4	3.9	52
HE	7.9	12.9	5	63.3
Level 3	6.4	9.1	2.7	42.2
Level 2	14	16.1	2.1	15
None	34.6	36.1	1.5	4.3

Data from Labour Force Survey

also higher than the rate for university graduates.

Looking at how the risk of becoming 'Neet' has changed over time, the data reveals that there are two quite different stories to be told:

- For graduates, the rising number who are not in work or enrolled on a course is a result of the recession – the number in this category has increased by over a half since the recession hit in 2008. Experience tells us that these graduates are likely to do better than non-graduates when the economy recovers.
- On the other hand, for young people with no qualifications, the recession has had only a very small impact. Over a third (34.6 per cent) of this group were already 'Neet' before the recession struck, and in the first quarter of 2010 this remained at a similar rate – 36.1 per cent. This suggests a long-term problem whose route causes are



not connected to the recent economic upheaval.

While the impact of the recession on graduate employment is a cause for concern, it must not detract our attention from the long-standing structural problems facing those at the bottom end of the education system and labour market. These problems are unlikely to go away when the recovery is secured.

The Government's 'Neet' plans

John Hayes MP, Minister of State at both the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Department for Education, explains how the coalition government plans to tackle the number of 'Neet' young people across Britain.

For the many young people who are leaving sixth forms and colleges at this time of year, thoughts naturally turn to the next stage in their lives. Some will be planning to stay in education, others will be preparing for the world of work. But what of those who do not get the grades they need, or who cannot find a job? Employment has been hit badly in the recession, as we well know, and it is young people that have taken the brunt of the downturn.

My colleagues and I are working closely together to address the issue of rising numbers of 18–24 year olds not in education, employment or training (Neet). I want to be clear that everyone should be entitled to training and work opportunities, and these opportunities need to be of value to the individual, employer and the economy. We know that when you are stuck in a rut, or in a cycle of interviews and rejections, it is hard to feel positive and motivated to keep looking for a break. That's why we are determined to provide as many chances for people of all ages to gain

worthwhile training, get into work and carve out a career.

Two-thirds of the Apprenticeships budget (£1.2 billion) is targeted at 16–18 year olds and the additional funding (£150 million) redeployed from Train to Gain will further help young adults by creating around 50,000 new training



positions. We really believe that apprenticeships provide an important vocational route for young people to develop their skills and progress in the workplace. Apprentices learn while they work,

earn a wage and contribute to the success of the business.

We are also ensuring that government support is being directed in the right way to support people and industry as the economy continues to grow and the demand for skilled workers returns. We are working to ensure that there is support available to help young people to develop the skills needed to secure a sustainable job. Young people will benefit from an integrated Work Programme which will be introduced by the summer of 2011, and will offer people targeted, personalised help, delivered through the best private and voluntary sector providers. We also want to support young unemployed people not in the Work Programme to gain work experience.

In the current economic climate colleges and training providers need to be able to deliver responsive and flexible training that is relevant to the labour market and employer training needs. We have given well performing colleges more say over what they do with their adult funding, so that courses that are of economic benefit and in high demand are supported. This will help all learners, including disadvantaged young people.

However, I want to enable the Further Education system to become even more flexible, to deliver more for less, and I want to hear from the sector how this can be done. On 22 July I launched parallel consultations on the Government's future strategy for skills and the funding of adult learning, the outcome of which will inform this autumn's Spending Review. [The link to the document and response pages is: www.bis.gov.uk/skills-consultation.]

We are also launching a new adult careers service, Next Step, which will make it easier for people to seek help and guidance on work, career and training opportunities. Information and advice is available face to face, over the telephone and online.

I firmly believe that skills are essential to obtaining, maintaining and progressing in sustained employment. We need to encourage young people, whether they are in employment or not, to develop and improve the skills that will help them progress. This will help them become more confident, secure a good job, provide for themselves and their families and contribute to their community. By building skills, education and training also helps to build a 'Big Society'.



Policy round-up

A new government has been formed since the last edition of **Youth Tracker** and it has made a number of changes to policy. Having heard from John Hayes MP, opposite, below we present our round-up of some of the changes. We also recommend checking the relevant department websites for the most up-to-date announcements.

EMA: Safe for now

The Educational Maintenance Allowance (cash given to 16–18 year olds to help them carry on learning) will be paid in full this year. But the Government will not make any announcements about its long-term future until the Autumn.

Connexions being hit by cuts

Connexions services, which provide impartial careers advice for young people, are facing cuts in some areas. Soon after the election the Department for Education (DfE) asked local authorities to make savings by reducing their 'area-based grants'. Although the DfE did not stipulate exactly where the cuts should fall, many local authorities have decided to make cuts to Connexions. The union Unison has launched a Save the Connexions Service campaign. However, the Government is also launching a new adult careers service called 'Next Step'.

Pupil premium

The Government will introduce a 'pupil premium' – which will give schools extra funding if they take children

from disadvantaged families – although the exact size of the premium will not be announced until after the Spending Review this Autumn.

Response to Select Committee on 'Neets'

In the spring edition of **Youth Tracker** we reported on a Select Committee review of young people who are 'Neet'. The Government has published a response to this report in which it accepts many of the Committee's findings, but rejects the idea of extending the so-called 'September guarantee' of a place in further education to 18 year olds.

www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmeduc/416/416.pdf

National Citizens Service pilots planned

A programme for 16 year olds to undertake a form of 'national service' in the summer months will be piloted next summer. Participants will spend at least ten days away from home completing outdoor challenges and community work.

www.number10.gov.uk/news/topstorynews/2010/07/pm-launches-national-citizen-service-pilots-53775

Changes to curriculum

The Government is currently reviewing the national curriculum and changes will be announced shortly. Ministers have promised a return to more 'traditional subjects', a focus on 'the basics' and giving teachers more flexibility to choose what they teach. www.education.gov.uk/curriculum

Consultation on welfare reform

The Department for Work and Pensions has issued a consultation document entitled '21st Century Welfare'. It sets out ways to simplify the benefits system and improve incentives to work, such as allowing people to keep more of what they earn as they move into work while withdrawing benefits at a single, more reasonable rate as people start to earn more money. The document includes ippr's proposal for a Single Working Age Benefit.

www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/21st-century-welfare.pdf
www.ippr.org/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=552

RESEARCH ROUND-UP

Interns need a fair wage (ippr, July 2010)

This briefing paper examines the role and nature of unpaid internships in the UK. Many well-qualified, talented and passionate young people lack the resources to pay their own way through an unpaid internship. The informal system of unpaid internships operating in many of the most exciting and influential industries actively excludes young people who come from less well-off families. The paper proposes a gradual phasing out of unpaid internships and discusses some options for ensuring that more young people have access to paid internship opportunities.

www.ippr.org/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=765

Against the odds (Audit Commission, July 2010)

This report analyses the records of 24,000 young people in 10 different areas between 2007 and 2009. It finds that one in four 16 to 18 year olds was categorised as Neet at some point in the two-year period – far higher than national statistics would suggest. The report calls for councils to get to grips with the needs of their local teenagers and for funding to be targeted in a

better way. It also calls for intervention to support under-16s at risk of dropping out of school, and better schemes to encourage young people into training or work.

www.audit-commission.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/AuditCommissionReports/NationalStudies/NEETsAgainsttheodds.pdf

Opening doors to apprenticeships (Young Foundation, June 2010)

This is the second of two linked reports on apprenticeships. It considers the practical next steps that need to be taken in order to better understand disadvantage and/or disengagement from apprenticeships, to raise awareness, to create more effective routes to apprenticeships, and to improve employer engagement. It is often the case that the young people who potentially have the most to gain from taking an apprenticeship are also those who experience the greatest barriers to access.

This publication forms part of the ongoing work of the Young Foundation's Apprenticeship Pathfinder Project.

www.youngfoundation.org/files/images/OpeningDoors2_FINAL.pdf

Anatomy of Youth (Demos, 2010)

Starting from an analysis of the attitudes of 16–25 year olds and some of the key trends they are currently living through, *An Anatomy of Youth* is a resource for people interested in what politics can do for the next generation. It asserts that the greatest asset we can give this generation is more political capital and the chance to shape the debate about the issues that will affect them tomorrow.

www.demos.co.uk/files/AoY_webfile.pdf?1270387139

Official Neet statistics (DfE, August 2010)

In August the Department for Education published its quarterly statistics on the levels of young people who are Neet. It notes that the proportion of 16–18 year olds who are Neet has remained broadly stable since 2003 – more in this age range are in education but fewer are in employment. Data from Connexions show Neet levels are highest in the North and lowest in London. The majority of Neet young people did not have 'an identifiable barrier' to participation.

www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STR/d000950/NEETQB2_2010.pdf

Youth Tracker: Acknowledgements | Contact us

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