

Section TEN B

(This section is specific to Northern Ireland)

Working with young people outside of education, employment or training

Introduction

This section focuses on young people who, for a variety of reasons, have spent a considerable amount of time outside of education, employment or training (NEET). It presents demographics for these young people and outlines the varying needs and issues that they may face. It offers practical advice and concludes with a list of contacts that will help you in your work.

Terminology

In Northern Ireland (NI) the terminology for young people who have spent a considerable amount of time outside of education, employment or training is problematic. The recognised term used in policy and legislation is the term 'NEET' (Not in Employment, Education or Training). The term itself, however, can be viewed as pejorative and reinforces the negative labelling of these young people. In the absence of an alternative term that is recognised by youth workers and policy makers alike, this document will adopt the shorthand NEET for young people who are considered outside of employment, education or training.



'Early School Leavers' is not a recognised term used in Northern Ireland policy and so the demographic of this chapter differs to the subgroup identified within the comparable for the Republic of Ireland (ROI) '**Working with Early School Leavers**'. Nevertheless, there is significant overlap between the 2 groups and the 'needs and issues' and 'developing inclusive practice' sections in this chapter would be helpful to youth workers in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Demographics

Northern Ireland does not have a comprehensive data source for young people outside of education, employment or training. The current estimate for young people between the ages of 16-24 who are NEET is 18%. However this figure taken from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) excludes young people in part-time education and those attending non-government funded training. This is broken down further for the 16-19 age groups below and show a diverse group of young people considered to be in the NEET category.ⁱ



Category	Percentage	Number
<p>Young people who are engaged in some form of activity which is not considered to be education, employment or training</p> <p>(This may include, for example, someone on a gap year or doing voluntary work*)</p>	16%	2,240
<p>Young people who are considered to have an 'identifiable barrier' to engaging in education, training or employment</p> <p>(Young people who fall into this category are considered to be the hardest to reach and most 'at risk' group)</p>	18%	2,520
<p>Young people who are considered to have no 'identifiable barrier'</p> <p>(Usually young people in this category have good qualification and skills levels but consider there to be a lack of suitable provision of opportunities in education, training or employment) ⁱⁱ</p>	66%	9,240
Total	100%	14,000

* It should be noted that the fact voluntary work is considered in the NEET category is misleading and the value of voluntary work for young people and society cannot be overstated.

Unemployment

Unemployment levels for young people are at a record high in the UK with over 1 million young people out of work. ⁱⁱⁱ

The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) (2010) indicates that unemployment is highest in this age bracket for those with no qualifications, the worst affected group being young women with no qualifications and unemployment has increased by nearly 18% since March 2008. ^{iv}

Northern Ireland didn't fare well when compared to the UK average for youth unemployment and against other countries in the OECD. ^v

Poverty and disadvantage

Young people who grow up in poverty are considerably more likely to spend long periods of time outside of education, employment or training.

The three main factors that influence whether young people become NEET have been identified by the Social Exclusion Unit (1999) as educational under-achievement, family disadvantage and family poverty. In Northern Ireland child poverty levels are higher than other parts of the UK and there are a much higher proportion of children living in persistent poverty. ^{vi}

The impact of poverty on a child's educational attainment, and as a consequence employment prospects, is well documented. Barnes et al (2008) found that secondary school children living in a family in persistent poverty were twice as likely as children living in temporary poverty to be suspended or expelled. ^{vii} There is also evidence in Northern



Ireland that young people from low income families find themselves in a vicious cycle of being unemployed and unable to afford the travel costs associated with the poorly paid jobs available to them.

Impact of the conflict

In recent research the legacy of the conflict in Northern Ireland features prominently in discussions about education and employment^{viii}. Trans-generational trauma, interpersonal violence within families and communities, intimidation from paramilitaries (including recruitment and violence), forced exiling, economic marginalisation and social exclusion are all compounding factors for young people living in areas that have been most affected by the NI conflict.^{ix}

Often issues such as ‘difficulties in concentrating’ or ‘aggressive behaviour’ are regularly ‘misinterpreted by others, being seen as deliberately disruptive behaviour’ rather than as a result of multiple factors.^x



Needs and issues of young people who are NEET

Young people who are not in education, employment or training are far from a homogenous group. There are a wide range of needs and issues impacting on young people who fall into the NEET category.

Self-esteem and confidence

Lacking a sense of achievement

Low educational attainment, low expectations from teachers or family and a lack of positive input from adults or peers may all contribute to a low self-esteem. Young people note that failure at an early age in education greatly affects their confidence and self-esteem and that if they weren't doing well academically, they were forgotten about.^{xi}

Stigmatized

Many young people feel stigmatized and believe that they are instantly labelled as trouble makers (because of their background or life experience) which sometimes lead to unfair judgments about them and a lack of support or belief in them to achieve.^{xii}

Bullying and discrimination

Young people who have experienced homophobia, racism, sectarianism or another form of bullying in school or the work place are substantially more likely to drop out of school or leave work.



Mental Health

Poor diet, lack of sleep, unmanaged stress levels, breakdown of relationships and trauma all contribute to poor mental health in young people which affects their ability to concentrate and causes low motivation.

Pressure to achieve

A pressure on young people to achieve academically in order to make something of their life can be difficult to manage. Without adequate support young people can struggle to cope with stress resulting from pressure placed on them by themselves, their family, teachers or others.

Coping with a chaotic life

Many young people have complex needs and issues and may have unpredictable lives at home. Some young people come into contact with multiple professionals, from the health sector, housing sector, education sector and sometimes the juvenile justice sector. Each sector is working in isolation and often young people feel like they are being 'bounced around' services adding to their sense of instability.^{xiii}

Impact of unemployment

A correlation has been shown between increased unemployment and suicide rates. This presents a further concern for young people who lack the sense of worth and satisfaction found through employment.^{xiv}



Motivation and Opportunity

A sense of possibility and direction

Knowing what you are good at and what you want to do in life is not an easy question for anyone to answer. Many young people feel pressurised to make choices that impact on their future without any real sense of what they want or what's available to them. Others are hindered by a lack of ambition from those around them including parents, teachers, friends and the wider community.^{xv}

Opportunities

There are fewer work experience placements available for young people in the current climate and the opportunities available to young people transitioning from education to training or employment are highly dependent on the school they attend and the flexibility of options on offer. These transitions can be compounded by geography and a lack of access to the necessary finances for transport to and from training or employment.^{xvi}

Trust relationship with a significant adult

The support provided by a significant adult, whether that is a youth worker, teacher, or family member, is often the turning point for many young people. Unfortunately, not everyone has this and the lack of positive encouragement from a respected adult has negative consequences.^{xvii}



Social Environment

It's not enough to address young people in isolation but to understand the impact of the wider environment in which they live.

Peers

Young people can find it difficult to break out of the 'norms' of their social environment. For example, if all their friends have a negative perception of education or are unemployed it is difficult to challenge this in their own lives. The influence of peers positively and negatively is often cited by young people as a key factor in achieving in education, training or employment.^{xviii}

Parents

Research into the educational achievement of young people continues to highlight the environment at home as having a major role to play. If young people are supported and encouraged at home then it acts as a positive motivator. The antithesis is also true.

Community

Breaking out of community expectations is a challenge for young people.

"Where you come from plays a big part in it"

(Young Person).^{xix} Negative perceptions of school or work that pervade a community will inevitably feature in a young person's attitude. It requires a great deal of effort to walk against the tide.



Drugs and alcohol

Social pressures such as drugs and alcohol have been mentioned by young people as a reason for becoming NEET and as a barrier to escaping it.^{xx}

Experience of Education

Many young people who are at risk of becoming NEET have a negative experience of school and as a result are likely to disengage from education altogether or become excluded.

The Northern Ireland Curriculum Cohort Study found that low-attaining and low-engaged young people, coming towards the end of Key Stage 3, are highly critical of the relevance of the curriculum for their lives and of teaching methods used.^{xxi}



School and Teachers

Young people often feel looked down on by teachers who don't respect them, contributing to their reluctance to remain engaged in school and learning.

Learning environment

Often the set-up of the learning environment hinders children and young people's engagement particularly for those who learn through doing or who have a shorter attention span and require more breaks to stay engaged.

The inflexibility of the learning environment within school and a lack of awareness of the extent of pressure experienced by young people outside of school heighten their sense of isolation in a formal learning environment.

Numeracy and literacy levels

Young people who experience difficulties in literacy and numeracy often have multiple social and personal factors affecting their ability to learn. Disruption at home can place significant pressure on children and young people and a lack of support and space in which to do homework means that young people fall behind and slip into a cycle of missing school or disengaging from learning which results in low educational attainment.

External barriers

There are a number of external barriers impact on a young person's engagement with education, training and employment.

Additional Support

Some young people require additional support and may not have access to the same level of opportunity in education, training or employment. For example:

- Young people with a disability
- Young people who have English as an additional language
- Young carers



Finances and resources

There are challenges for young people in accessing the financial support needed to travel to work or training which limits their opportunities. Also, there is the suggestion that many young people feel it is not worth their while to work because of the nature of the benefit system and the real possibility that low paid employment becomes financially unviable for them.^{xxii}

Young people in care

Young people in care are disproportionately represented in the NEET category. The unpredictability of 'home' life has a real impact on their education and consequently further employment and training opportunities.

Criminal record

Having a criminal record can be a substantial barrier to accessing training and employment opportunities. It is also increasingly difficult to obtain placements from employers who are reluctant to take young people on with a criminal record.^{xxiii}



Developing inclusive practice for young people who are NEET

There are five key elements to programmes that unlock the potential of young people who find themselves outside of education, employment or training.^{xxiv}

Recruitment

A youth work approach to recruitment may include street work, networking within communities and developing partnerships with other agencies.

Learning environment

Needs based, flexible approach to learning is crucial including group work, discussion based activities and ensuring the young person is an active participant in the learning process.

Support

Peer and individual mentoring with individual goal-setting, pastoral care and practical support systems in place have all found success.

Structure

It is important to have a small step, staged approach with modules that have credit value to suit the varied learning needs of the young person.

Follow-up

Sign posting and post programme support is crucial to ensuring young people continue to engage with education, training or employment.

Preparation

Work with young people before they become involved in a programme to identify support needs and get them to a place that they are ready to engage and take responsibility for their learning.

Outreach

It is important to think through how you connect with young people in advertising your programmes. Consideration needs to be given to publicising programmes through a variety of channels. Literacy levels and English language skills should be taken into account.

Identify support needs

Some support needs may relate to: mental health, physical health, experiences of education, literacy and numeracy skills, family background, homelessness, involvement in the juvenile justice system, influence of peers or community, cultural/ethnic/faith background.

Outline Expectations

Work with young people in advance to ensure they feel safe and agree on the nature of their involvement in the programme.

Establish trust

Pre-engagement is crucial to building up a rapport and to establishing a trust relationship between the young person and the worker.



Rebuild Confidence

Some young people will require one to one support to rebuild their confidence and ensure they have a 'readiness to engage'^{xxv} in your service. They will need a certain level of confidence and skills before being involved long term in any youth/ training initiative.

Delivery of Programmes^{xxvi}

Even if young people are engaging on a limited basis with your organisation try to use the opportunities you have to work with them to set personal goals and provide them with a level of responsibility that allows them to rebuild their confidence and skills in a safe environment.

Participation

Support young people to take ownership and responsibility over their own learning. Encourage them in what they are already doing and communicate effectively the value of education and employment.

Provide a sense of purpose

Young people need to see the point of education, training or employment in order for them to engage with it. Youth workers can support young people to re-engage with education or employment by helping them develop a vision for what they can achieve.



Be flexible

A youth work approach provides a flexible alternative to formal education and training. It is important to vary the content of a programme to suit a variety of learning styles and be flexible in your approach. Allow for regular breaks and don't try and cover too much all at once.

Give responsibility

Provide opportunities for young people to put into practice their learning through taking on roles within your programme or setting up placements for them.

Follow-up

Ensure you finish any programme well and put in place adequate supports for young people to continue to engage in some form of learning or employment. If a young person leaves a programme then it is important to remain engaged with that young person at some level to provide opportunities for coming back on board.



Checklist 10B - How accessible is your organisation to young people outside of education, employment or training?

This checklist can help you to identify how you can improve your service for early school leavers

Public image

How we present our service to our community

Partnerships:

- Our service partners with local schools, training and education providers and local businesses to help support young people at risk

YES PARTLY NO

Policies and procedures

We have a written commitment to deliver an equal and inclusive service

- Our service has clear guidelines and protocols with our local school(s) relating to truancy and behaviour codes for school related programmes

YES PARTLY NO

Programme planning and delivery

Our programmes are designed and delivered to include the diverse needs and identities of early school leavers

- Our service provides a homework help service or refers young people to other homework help services **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Promotion :

- Our organisation uses a range of verbal communication strategies to promote our service **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
- young people do not need to be able to read or write to access our service **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Promoting literacy and numeracy skills:

- Our service incorporates literacy and numeracy skills into our programmes, including fun programmes **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**
- Our service provides educational support **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Connecting young people to education, training or employment :

- Our service actively links young people back into education services, training providers and employment opportunities **YES** **PARTLY** **NO**

Professional development

Our staff and volunteers are trained and supported to deliver an inclusive youth service

- Staff receive training on equality issues and integration strategies

YES **PARTLY** **NO**

Participation

We make sure we include the voices of young people at all levels of our youth service

- Our service consults with young people from a variety of educational backgrounds to assess arising needs and issues

YES **PARTLY** **NO**

Useful contacts

Voluntary and Community Organisations

Include Youth

Include Youth, Alpha House
3 Rosemary Street
Belfast, BT1 1QA

Phone: 028 9031 1007

Web:

<http://includeyouth.org/giveandtake/>

The Give and Take Scheme works with 16 to 21 year olds from across Northern Ireland. Many of the young people have been in care or identified by social services as not ready to take part in mainstream training or employment.

YouthAction NI

YouthAction Northern Ireland,
14 College Square North,
Belfast, BT1 6AS

Phone: 028 9024 0551

Webs: www.youthaction.org/

YouthAction NI run a number of programmes including:

REACH – a bespoke opportunity for young people aged 16-25 years who are outside education, employment and training

Moving On – An accredited training programme for young mothers

Apprenticeship in youth work – is an important progression route for young leaders aged 18 – 25 years

The Bytes Project

Unit 5, The Filor Building
155 Northumberland Street
Belfast
BT13 2JF

Phone: 028 - 90288810

Email: admin@bytes.org

Web: www.bytes.org/

The Bytes Project offers drop-in facilities with free access to ICT resources as well as structured personal development and job ready learning programmes.

Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO)

Amelia House
4 Amelia Street
Belfast
BT2 7GS

Phone: 028 - 9032 0157

Web: www.niacro.co.uk/

NIACRO run a service for young people referred by the Youth Justice Agency and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) called the Youth Employability Programme. They also assist people with a conviction get back into employment following a sentence through their Jobtrack programme.

Princes Trust

Head Office
Block 5, Jennymount Court
North Derby Street
Belfast BT15 3HN

Phone: 028 - 9074 5454

Email: webinfol@princes-trust.org.uk

Web: www.princes-trust.org.uk/

The Princes Trust xl programme runs in 108 schools and centres in Northern Ireland. These include special schools and EOATAS centres. This 2 year programme delivers five modules to underachieving 14 -16 year olds.

Opportunity Youth

Hildon House
30 - 34 Hill Street
Belfast
BT1 2LB

Phone: 028 - 9043 5810

Email: info@opportunity-youth.org

Web: www.opportunity-youth.org

Opportunity Youth programmes and services offer a range of support for hard to young people who are NEET. Some of these include:

- Training for Success
- Mentoring, advocacy, training and support for young offenders
- Bespoke programmes for alternative education projects, schools and communities

Rathbone

122 Donegall Street
Belfast

Phone: 028 - 90311570

Email: belfast@rathboneuk.org

Web: www.rathboneuk.org/

Rathbone's core programmes of learning focus on youth training linked to employability and skills. This has been focused on Entry to Employment Scheme (E2E) and Apprenticeships.

Springvale Learning

200 Springfield Road
Belfast, BT12 7DB

Phone: 028 - 90 242362

Email:

info@springvalelearning.com

Web: www.springvalelearning.com/

Springvale Learning is a dynamic, innovative and creative vocational learning centre for adults and young people. They deliver 'Training for Success' and 'Steps to Work' programmes.

Youth Service

The Education and Library Boards provide a number of youth services that address the needs of young people who are NEET through supporting voluntary and statutory youth provision across Northern Ireland.

Youth work in schools

Specifically with under achieving young people delivering both awarding body accredited qualifications such as the Princes Trust xl certificate (ASDAN), youth leaderships certificate (OCN) and programmes such as the GLAD project (separate paper attached).

Outreach/detached youth work

A targeted intervention youth work programme with young people in the 15-20 age range.

Apprenticeship/trainee youth worker model

As a longer term capacity building measure to enhance the employability of community engaged young people.

Growing, Learning and Developing (GLAD) Programme

The GLAD programme is targeted at 15 – 18 year old young people in Youth Groups and schools in the WELB who are disaffected with school, who are underachieving at school, or who have left school with few or no qualifications.

Western Education and Library Board (WELB)

www.welbni.org/index.cfm/do/YouthService

Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB)

www.belb.org.uk/Youth/

North Eastern Education and Library Board

www.neelb.org.uk/youth/

Southern Education and Library Board (SELB)

www.selb.org/youth/

This chapter has been developed by Ben Ewan (Youthnet) with input from Clare Conlon (YouthAction NI) and Joe Hawkins (Youth Council NI) for 'Access All Areas – a Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector' published by NYCI and Youthnet 2012

South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB)

www.seelb.org.uk/

Youth Council of Northern Ireland**Youth Works Programme**

The 'Youth Works' programme aims to identify and engage a target groups of young people age 16 to 17 who are not in education, employment or training, have no formal qualifications. It is managed by the Youth Council of Northern Ireland and funded through the Department of Education and the International Fund for Ireland.

Alternative Education Providers**The Pathways Project**

174 Trust, Antrim Road
Belfast, BT14 6BP

Web: www.pathwaysproject-aep.org/

The Pathways Project is an Alternative Education Project (AEP) which aims to work with those young people who have been excluded, or have disengaged from mainstream education.

Newstart Education Centre

Unit 13/1 Blackstaff Mill, 77 Springfield Road, Belfast BT12 7AE

Phone: 028 - 90315674

Web: www.newstarteducation-aep.org/

Newstart is a community based organisation that is an AEP that provides cross-community service for young people who are excluded or disengaged from the mainstream education system.

Conway Education Centre

5-8 Conway Street Belfast, BT13 2DE

Phone: 028 - 90248543**Webs:** <http://conwayeducationcentre-aep.org/>

Conway Education Centre and the Day School strive to provide an environment that is safe and secure for children, and where all are treated with dignity and respect.

Open Doors Learning Centre8 – 30 Barrack Street Belfast,
BT12 4AH**Phone:** 028 - 9032 5867**Web:** www.opendoorslearningcentre-aep.org/

The Open Doors Learning Centre is an AEP which aims to work with those young people who have been excluded, or have disengaged from, mainstream education.

Education by ChoiceThe Bridge, 135 Ravenhill Road,
Belfast BT6 8DR**Phone:** 0759540669**Web:** www.educationbychoice-aep.org/

Education By Choice provides year 11 and 12 Students who are not attending School with another chance to gain an education.

Upper Anderson Community Forum
(UCAF) 37a Tullymore Gardens Belfast,
BT11 8NE**Phone:** 028 - 90 622201**Web:** www.uacf-aep.org/

Tullymore AEP is part of a wider social inclusion initiative to address the educational needs of young people.

Regional Colleges

Northern Ireland's six Regional Colleges operate across 40+ campuses and through over 400 outreach community locations. The Colleges offer a wide range of courses from entry level through to post-graduate.

Southern Regional College

Campuses: Banbridge, Armagh, Newry, Lurgan, Kilkeel and Portadown

Email: info@src.ac.uk

Web: www.src.ac.uk/

South Eastern Regional College

Campuses: Ballyboley, Ballynahinch, Bangor, Downpatrick, Holywood, Lisburn, Newtownards, Newcastle

Email: info@serc.ac.uk

Web: www.serc.ac.uk/

Northern Regional College

Campuses: Ballymena, Ballymoney, Coleraine, Larne, Magherafelt, Newtownabbey

Web: www.nrc.ac.uk

South Western Regional College

Campuses: Omagh, Cookstown, Dungannon, Enniskillen

Web: www.swc.ac.uk/

North West Regional College

Campuses: Derry-Londonderry, Limavady, Strabane

Email: info@nwrc.ac.uk

Web: www.nwrc.ac.uk/

Belfast Metropolitan College

Campuses: Titanic Quarter, Gerald Moag (Millfield), Castlereagh, Tower Street.

Phone: 028 - 90 265 265

Web: www.belfastmet.ac.uk

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- ⁱⁱ NEET Scoping Study (2010) Department of Employment and Learning
- ⁱⁱⁱ Labour Market Statistics (Nov 2011) *Office for National Statistics*
www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_241735.pdf
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- ^{vi} Horgan, G. Gray, A. Conlon, C. (2010) Young People not in Education, Employment or Training. Ark Policy Brief
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- ^{viii} Haydon, D. McAlister, S. Scraton, P. (2009) Childhood in transition. *Experiencing Marginalisation and Conflict in NI*.
- ^{ix} *ibid*
- ^x Smyth et al. 2004: 43 in Childhood in transition (2009) Haydon, D et al.
- ^{xi} YouthAction NI (Sept 2010) (Re) Gaining Self Worth and a Sense of Purpose
- ^{xii} Include Youth (Jun 2010) Submission to inquiry into young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)
- ^{xiii} *ibid*
- ^{xiv} Suicide and Homicide in Northern Ireland National Confidential Inquiry, Professor Appleby, 9/06/11 www.medicine.manchester.ac.uk/research/projectdetails/index.aspx?ID=1659
- ^{xv} YouthAction NI (Sept 2010) (Re) Gaining Self Worth and a Sense of Purpose
- ^{xvi} Include Youth (Jun 2010) Submission to inquiry into young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)
- ^{xvii} *ibid*
- ^{xviii} YouthAction NI (Sept 2010) (Re) Gaining Self Worth and a Sense of Purpose
- ^{xix} *ibid*
- ^{xx} *ibid*
- ^{xxi} Horgan, G. Gray, A. Conlon, C. (2010) Young People not in Education, Employment or Training. Ark Policy Brief
- ^{xxii} Include Youth (Jun 2010) Submission to inquiry into young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)

^{xxiii} *ibid*

^{xxiv} YouthAction NI (2011) A response to 'Pathways to Success' NEET Strategy Consultation (DEL)

^{xxv} Include Youth (2011) Response to the Department of Employment and Learning's
Consultation on Pathways to Success

^{xxvi} YouthAction NI (Sept 2010) (Re) Gaining Self Worth and a Sense of Purpose