

National Assembly for Wales
Enterprise and Learning Committee

Young people not in education,
employment or training

October 2010



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Enterprise and Learning Committee

The Enterprise and Learning Committee is appointed by the National Assembly for Wales to consider and report on issues within the areas of economic development, transport, education and skills. In particular, the Committee may examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Welsh Government and associated public bodies.

Powers

The Committee was established following the National Assembly Elections in May 2007 as one of the Assembly's scrutiny committees. Its powers are set out in the National Assembly for Wales's Standing Orders, particularly Standing Order 12. These are available at <http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-guide-docs-pub/bus-assembly-guidance.htm>

Committee membership

Committee Member	Party	Constituency / Region
Gareth Jones (Chair)	Plaid Cymru	Aberconwy
Christine Chapman	Labour	Cynon Valley
Jeff Cuthbert	Labour	Caerphilly
Andrew Davies	Labour	Swansea West
Paul Davies	Welsh Conservative Party	Preseli Pembrokeshire
Nerys Evans	Plaid Cymru	Mid and West Wales
Brian Gibbons	Labour	Aberavon
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The Committee's Recommendations

The Committee's recommendations to Welsh Ministers are listed below, in the order that they appear in this Report. Please refer to the relevant pages of the report to see the supporting evidence and conclusions.

Recommendation 1. We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government continue to ensure, by working with the UK Government where appropriate, that headline and local data relating to young people not in education, training or employment are as comprehensive, robust and up-to-date as possible. (Page 13)

Recommendation 2. We further recommend that headline and local data on young people not in education, employment or training are regularly impressed on all those agencies that have a role in addressing the issue to ensure proactive and reactive measures are prioritised. (Page 13)

Recommendation 3. Given that young disabled people are twice as likely to be not in education, employment or training as non-disabled people, we recommend that Welsh Assembly Government statistical publications should routinely analyse data in relation to disability and young people that are not in education, employment or training. (Page 13)

Recommendation 4. We recommend that as part of the review of Careers Wales, the Minister should seek to strengthen its performance in managing a national register of young people not in education, employment or training that is both consistent and comprehensive, and also in maintaining a database that can match job vacancies with unemployed young people. We further recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government keep a monitoring role on performance in this area. (Page 14)

Recommendation 5. We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government evaluate local authority and regional approaches to addressing the issue of young people not in education, employment or training in order to develop a best practice model and guidance for delivering and monitoring effective services. (Page 20)

Recommendation 6. We recommend that one of the outcomes of the Minister’s review of his Department’s support for young people not in education, employment or training should be the development of clear, multi-agency guidelines to ensure practitioners adopt an early, consistent and holistic approach to identifying those at risk of disengaging or becoming not in education, employment or training, and that appropriate intervention is provided at an early stage.

(Page 23)

Recommendation 7. We recommend that the Welsh Government should review how effectively local authorities are implementing existing statutory requirements to support the education of care leavers up to the age of 25. The review should include evidence from care leavers who are within the further and higher education systems and those who are not in employment, education or training. (Page 24)

Recommendation 8. We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government should consider how best to extend and fund the good practice of programmes run by third sector organisations across the whole of Wales, in conjunction with and to complement the programmes of local and school authorities. (Page 26)

Recommendation 9. We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government work with partners in both the public and third sectors to involve employers at an early stage in working with learners, learning coaches and others so that there is a more joined-up approach to helping young people progress into securing employment or apprenticeship opportunities, and particularly in providing work-based learning opportunities for young people who have additional learning needs. (Page 27)

Recommendation 10. We recommend that because the issue of young people not in education, employment or training cuts across a range of Welsh Assembly Government Departments and policies, there should be one Minister who will lead on the coordination of strategy and action plans, monitor implementation, and be accountable at a national level. (Page 30)

Recommendation 11. We recommend that Welsh Ministers should review and update the existing strategy for young people not in education, employment or training so that it covers the 16 to 25 age group, and that they should introduce a new national target for reducing the proportion of 16 to 25 year-olds not in education, employment or training, ensuring that all relevant Government Departments be responsible for its delivery. (Page 30)

Recommendation 12. As part of our recommended evaluation of local authority and regional approaches to addressing the issue of young people not in education, employment or training, we recommend that Welsh Ministers should identify at local level a lead agency for young people not in education, employment or training. This agency should coordinate partnerships, identify responsibilities, manage the journey for young people from one stage to the next, and monitor performance. (Page 31)

Recommendation 13. We recommend that Ministers should review the adequacy of the existing constitutional arrangement for the Department for Work and Pensions and JobCentre Plus in a devolved context and work with their UK counterparts on making the necessary changes to ensure the arrangement is more effective in future. (Page 34)

Recommendation 14. We recommend that Welsh Ministers work with UK colleagues to ensure that personal advisers and outreach workers form a central, rather than marginal, element of JobCentre Plus's activity in order to improve the effectiveness of its engagement programmes. (Page 34)

Recommendation 15. We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government work with the Department for Work and Pensions to ensure that in the eventuality of larger numbers of young unemployed people applying for assistance under the future Work Programme, those in Wales who are most disadvantaged do not lose out, and that those in greatest need can be fast-tracked for more intensive support. (Page 35)

Recommendation 16. We recommend that in order to engender a culture of collaboration rather than competition the Welsh Assembly Government should work with local, regional and national agencies to coordinate the delivery of European Union and non-EU funded projects for young people not in education, employment or training. (Page 36)

Recommendation 17. We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government should review how the acquisition of “soft skills” for young people not in education, employment or training – and those at risk of becoming so – could be given greater recognition within education, employment and training settings. (Page 38)

Recommendation 18. We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government should ensure that engagement or outreach coaches are available to intervene at any stage in a young person’s life to give direct support on a range of family, finance, education, employment or health related issues. (Page 38)

Introduction

1. An estimated 68,800 of young people aged 16 to 24 in Wales are not in education, employment or training.¹ The aim of this inquiry by the National Assembly's Enterprise and Learning Committee was to examine the impact of current strategies on those young people and to make recommendations to Welsh Ministers for improving existing provision.

2. The Committee held two formal evidence sessions on this topic between 10 and 24 June 2010, and on 17 June visited the Info-Nation Centre in Swansea² to talk directly to young people to find out about their views and experiences.

3. We are very grateful to all the people who provided us with oral or written evidence. We heard some very powerful and compelling statements during this inquiry. The full list of evidence received is listed at the end of this report.

4. As part of our questioning of witnesses we also endeavoured to address points raised in a petition submitted by Action for Children,³ which was referred to us by the Petitions Committee:

“We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Assembly Government to provide more work based learning provision that better meets the needs of more vulnerable young people, that really moves them on and ensures they achieve at least NVQ2 level qualifications. We would particularly like to see more provision for homeless young people seeking training who are not in the care of a local authority.”

¹ Statistical First Release, SDR 113/2010, 28 July 2010, Welsh Assembly Government. These data are not disaggregated by unitary authority or regions of Wales. However the latest published data in the Welsh Assembly Government's Statistical Bulletin, SB 59/2010, 28 July 2010, show a significant variation in the estimated percentage of Year 11 leavers (16 year-olds) who are not in education, employment or education by unitary authority, ranging from between rates of 2.1% to 9.1% across the 22 Welsh authorities

² Info-Nation is a one-stop shop for information, advice and support in Swansea city centre for young people aged 11 to 25

³ Action for Children written evidence paragraph 3.4. Action for Children is a UK-wide charity that provides services to over 12,000 vulnerable children and young people in Wales

We note the Petitions Committee is carrying out its own more detailed investigation into this issue, but we hope recommendations 7, 9 and 15 of our report will complement that Committee's findings.

5. Our inquiry was timely as Leighton Andrews AM, Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning, was concurrently reviewing the work of his department in providing support for young people who find themselves in the position of not being in education, employment or training. We welcome the action the Minister has taken so far, and also the constructive way in which he approached giving evidence to this inquiry. We trust our conclusions and recommendations will help inform the development of future policy in this field.

What is a “NEET”?

Definitions

6. Young people not in education, employment or training are often called “NEET”. The Welsh Assembly Government’s NEETs strategy⁴ outlined a broad categorisation of young people not in education, employment or training along the lines of a continuum. It ranged from “core” NEETs – those with social and behavioural problems or other more complex needs, including those who come from families where not working is an accepted norm; to “floating” or “at risk” NEETs – young people who tend to have spells of being NEET and have most of the problems of the core group but are more willing to engage with support; to “transition” or “gap year” NEETs – where the young people are only not in education, employment or training for a short term and who do not require government intervention.

7. The Welsh Assembly Government’s strategy referred to “flows of young people into and out of NEET status – sometimes referred to as the ‘revolving door’ or ‘NEET churn.’” The Minister’s written evidence also pointed to a hard core of youth unemployment that is considered to be “a long-standing structural problem.”⁵

⁴ Reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training in Wales. Delivering skills that work for Wales, Welsh Assembly Government, April 2009. This document is part of a series of themed papers aimed at addressing skills issues identified in the Welsh Assembly Government’s Skills and Employment Strategy, “Skills that Work for Wales,” published in July 2008

⁵ Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning written evidence page 1

Causes

8. The Welsh Assembly Government's NEETs strategy stated that "household worklessness and disengagement from education" are likely to be two of the main contributors to NEET status and that:

- 50 per cent of care leavers are NEET on their 19th birthday;
- NEET young people are twice as likely to have caring responsibilities, compared with other young people;
- 84 per cent of mothers who were under 21 were NEET, compared with 46 per cent of older mothers;
- 80 per cent of young offenders in England and Wales did not have five or more GCSEs A*-C, and 80 per cent were not in full-time education at the time of their arrest.

9. The Welsh Assembly Government's NEETs strategy also identified other groups of underperformers in schools who were at higher risk of becoming NEET down the line - white males in some areas, certain ethnic minority groups, and Gypsy Traveller young people.

10. Evidence we received from the National Deaf Children's Society revealed that deaf children and young people consistently underachieve at every Key Stage, which has an impact on their ability to secure employment, and that deaf adults are more likely to be unemployed than non-disabled people.⁶

11. The causes of young people not attending education or training or employment are therefore complex, and often highly individualised.⁷ The NEET "group" is therefore highly diverse, with varying needs that require different approaches.

Statistics

12. The Welsh Assembly Government publishes two different sets of statistics for people who are not in education, employment or training in Wales: the Statistical First Release, which is published annually, and the Statistical Bulletin.

⁶ National Deaf Children's Society written evidence page 1

⁷ Association of School and College Leaders Cymru / National Association of Headteachers written evidence paragraph 4

13. The Statistical First Release “Participation of young people in education and the labour market” is the most robust Welsh Assembly Government source for figures for young people aged 16 to 24 in Wales not in education, employment or training. The most recent Statistical First Release provides data for 2008 and 2009, although the 2009 data are provisional estimates that have been introduced this year on an experimental basis (data having previously been published 19 months after the reference period). The following table from that publication shows that 12.0 per cent of 16 to 18 year-olds and 21.6 per cent of 19 to 24 year-olds in Wales were estimated to be not engaged in education, training nor in employment for the year-end 2009.⁸

Table 2: Estimated participation in education/training or not engaged in education or training *nor* in employment (NEET), by gender

Year End Persons	16 to 18 year olds		19 to 24 year olds	
	In education or training	NEET	In education or training	NEET
	<i>Per cent</i>			
2004 (r)	73.1	11.6	39.0	16.3
2005 (r)	74.5	10.3	39.1	17.4
2006 (r)	76.0	10.0	38.5	18.0
2007 (r)	74.3	11.8	37.4	17.5
2008	75.9	12.5	36.4	17.6
2009	78.6	12.0	37.9	21.6

14. Estimates of the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training for each UK country for the years 2008 and 2009 are also set out in the Statistical First Release,⁹ and show that Wales performs the worst for the 19 to 24 year-old category.

Table 4: Estimates of the proportion of young people not in education or training employment (NEET) by age and UK country, 2008 and 2009

	16 to 18 year olds		19 to 24 year olds	
	2008	2009	2008	2009
	<i>Per cent</i>			
Wales	12.8	12.1	17.4	21.3
England	11.1	11.1	15.9	18.7
Scotland	11.8	13.0	15.6	17.5
Northern Ireland	9.0	9.7	17.3	19.2
UK	11.2	11.2	16.0	18.7

Source: Annual Population Survey

⁸ Source: Office of National Statistics, Higher Education Statistics Agency, Welsh Assembly Government, Annual Population Survey

⁹ These estimates are provided using only the Annual Population Survey

15. Between the publication of Statistical First Releases, the Welsh Assembly Government also publishes a Statistical Bulletin, “Young people not in education, employment or training”¹⁰ that provides “more timely, but less statistically robust” statistics and includes analysis by gender, age and region.

16. We welcome the Welsh Government’s recent move to include more timely provisional estimates in its Statistical First Release on the participation of young people in education and the labour market, and also its commitment to review the accuracy of those estimates.

We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government continue to ensure, by working with the UK Government where appropriate, that headline and local data relating to young people not in education, training or employment are as comprehensive, robust and up-to-date as possible.

We further recommend that headline and local data on young people not in education, employment or training are regularly impressed on all those agencies that have a role in addressing the issue to ensure proactive and reactive measures are prioritised.

17. Written evidence we received from Skill Wales stated that the Welsh Assembly Government’s Statistical Bulletin does not currently include analysis of young people not in education, employment or training in relation to disability.¹¹

Given that young disabled people are twice as likely to be not in education, employment or training as non-disabled people, we recommend that Welsh Assembly Government statistical publications should routinely analyse data in relation to disability and young people that are not in education, employment or training.

18. Careers Wales¹² has a role in managing a register of young people not in education, employment or training. Yet evidence we

¹⁰ Year to 31 March 2010 and for 16 to 18 year-olds only

¹¹ Skill Wales written evidence paragraph 2. Skill Wales helps young people and adults with any kind of disability to realise their potential in further, continuing and higher education, training, volunteering and employment

¹² Careers Wales consists of six companies contracted by the Welsh Assembly Government to provide specified careers related support for the people of Wales. It is currently being reviewed by Welsh Ministers

received from Rathbone Cymru argued that the register could be made more consistent across Wales.¹³

We recommend that as part of the review of Careers Wales, the Minister should seek to strengthen its performance in managing a national register of young people not in education, employment or training that is both consistent and comprehensive, and also in maintaining a database that can match job vacancies with unemployed young people. We further recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government keep a monitoring role on performance in this area.

Connotations

19. We received evidence that argued that the term “NEET” is “too narrow and has significant negative overtones.”¹⁴ The Minister has previously stated that the term “NEET” is not a noun, a view shared by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers:

“The term ‘NEET’ is *fundamentally* problematic as it classifies a heterogeneous group with one label and is also a negative category.”¹⁵

20. This view was shared by many of the young people we spoke to at Info-Nation in Swansea. Some of the young people had produced a short film, “I’m a NEET”¹⁶ which drew on their experiences of trying to rub off the NEET label and combat some common assumptions about NEETs.

21. We also received evidence that argued that the definition of “NEET” ignored young people who, for example, worked on family farms or were employed by family members in domestic activity such as caring for children or relatives.¹⁷ Prince’s Trust Cymru¹⁸ regarded volunteering as another missing category as it was considered a positive outcome for young people that could lead on to

¹³ Rathbone Cymru written evidence page 4. Rathbone Cymru runs programmes for young people from 11 centres across Wales

¹⁴ ConstructionSkills Wales written evidence page 1. ConstructionSkills Wales is the Welsh arm of the Sector Skills Council for the construction sector

¹⁵ Association of Teachers and Lecturers written evidence page 3

¹⁶ The “I’m a NEET” DVD was funded by Arts Council of Wales through the Reach the Heights programme

¹⁷ ConstructionSkills Wales written evidence page 1

¹⁸ Prince’s Trust Cymru is the Welsh arm of a UK charity that helps disadvantaged young people

employment.¹⁹ As we heard from one young person in Swansea, “voluntary work is more rewarding than anything.”

Policy Background

22. Policies relevant to young people referred to as not in education, employment or training cut across a wide range of disciplines at both the Welsh and UK levels, including economic development, child poverty, mental health, education, training and skills, health and well-being, transport, drugs and alcohol, equality, youth, benefits and housing. The cross-cutting nature of the issue can be an advantage, but it also poses considerable challenges for agencies to think and work together on addressing solutions. The main strategies are detailed below.

Welsh Assembly Government strategies

23. The Welsh Assembly Government’s policy document, “The Learning Country: Vision into Action” (October 2006) contained a target for:

“The percentage of 16-18 year olds in employment, education or training to reach 93 per cent by 2010” (2007 milestone – 90 per cent).”

A number of “One Wales”²⁰ commitments also related to the issue of people not in education, employment or training, such as increasing overall employment rates, increasing the number of apprenticeships, widening participation in further and higher education, and creating links between education and entrepreneurship.

24. In April 2009, the Welsh Assembly Government published its strategy, “Reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training in Wales. Delivering skills that work for Wales.” The strategy focused on the 16 to 17 year-old age group; **there is no overall strategy for young people aged 16 to 24 who are not in education, employment or training.** The strategy stated that in order to reduce the proportion of young people aged 16 to 18 who are not

¹⁹ Record of Proceedings paragraph 209, 10 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

²⁰ One Wales: A progressive agenda for the government of Wales, Welsh Assembly Government, June 2007

in education, employment or training, the following changes were needed:

- efficient processes for identifying and re-engaging those young people who become not in education, employment or training;
- a full range of learning options to meet demand;
- more targeted and intensive learning and personal support.

25. The strategy stated that the not in education, employment or training agenda is complex and that there are no simple solutions:

“What is important is that [we] make use of all available tools in an integrated way...rather than introduce compulsory learning beyond the age of 16, [our] vision is to transform learning provision for young people, by providing broader, more flexible learning options, matched by enhanced support and guidance.”

26. The strategy also stated that intelligence mapping and monitoring systems needed to be further developed in order to examine the overall provision and to record new entrants and leavers. The strategy acknowledged that “bespoke solutions, involving more intensive support and guidance are often required,” and that the Welsh Assembly Government will ensure that the role of the Learning Coach as a one-to-one mentor, as envisaged in the original Learning Pathways guidance, is made available for all young people who are not in education, employment or training.

27. The strategy was accompanied by an Action Plan that includes an intention to review forms of financial support offered to 16 to 19 year-olds and to conduct an evaluation of the Educational Maintenance Allowance scheme in Wales. The evaluation has now been completed,²¹ and we were pleased to see that recommendations made by this Committee last year²² for targeting the Educational Maintenance Allowance more effectively on learners that need it most, were accepted.

²¹ Written Statement by the Welsh Assembly Government, Changes to the Educational Maintenance Allowances Wales Scheme, 15 July 2010, Leighton Andrews, Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning

²² The Educational Maintenance Allowance, Enterprise and Learning Committee, June 2009

28. Earlier in 2010, the Welsh Assembly Government established an operational group to look at the journey of children and young people aged 0 to 25 years who may become economically inactive or disengaged from learning and society, and to examine what actions are in place. The Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning also established in February 2010 a task and finish group, chaired by Martin Mansfield of Wales TUC to investigate youth unemployment.²³

29. Other relevant Welsh Assembly Government strategies include Skillbuild, which is an all-age learning programme delivered through contracted Work Based Learning providers for people “who are not yet ready or able to enter an apprenticeship, or further learning or employment opportunities.” This scheme is the primary way that the Youth Guarantee (the Welsh Assembly Government’s guarantee of a learning place for all eligible 16 and 17 year-olds) is delivered. Some strategies have received European Union Structural Funds, such as ENGAGE,²⁴ Genesis 2 and Bridges into Work.²⁵

30. The 14-19 Learning Pathways policy in Wales is designed to focus on the individual learner and to provide all young people with a wider choice of both formal and informal learning opportunities that are better suited to their individual needs. It aims to offer a wider choice of courses from a local curriculum that will provide young people with the skills that will help them achieve their individual potential. The Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure provides the legislative context for this policy.

31. The introduction of the Foundation Phase for young children aged three to seven is also relevant as its objective is to offer “a sound foundation for future learning through a developmentally appropriate curriculum”. The emphasis of the Foundation Phase is on “learning by doing”.

²³ Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning written evidence page 1

²⁴ ENGAGE is a local authority and further education initiative backed with some £17 million from the Convergence European Social Fund through the Welsh Assembly Government. It is led by Neath Port Talbot local authority in collaboration with Swansea, Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire Councils and the six further education colleges across the region, which all provide match funding

²⁵ Bridges into Work provided oral and written evidence for the Enterprise and Learning Committee’s recent inquiry into Structural Funds: Implementation of the 2007-2013 Programmes

UK Government strategies

32. There is a range of UK Government (Department for Work and Pensions)²⁶ policies of relevance to young people not in education, employment or training in Wales. Many of those policies are now under review and therefore subject to change, but the main ones are highlighted below.

- The Young Person’s Guarantee is a guaranteed offer of a job, training or work experience for 18-24 year olds after six months’ unemployment. The scheme is scheduled to run until March 2012;
- The Future Jobs Fund supports “the creation of jobs for long-term unemployed young people and others who face significant disadvantage in the labour market,” and forms part of the Young Person’s Guarantee. Ministers have decided that although existing commitments made will be met, no further bids to the Fund will be approved;
- The Flexible New Deal is delivered by providers for Jobcentre Plus²⁷ and aims to help jobseekers “find a job, or get training or work experience.”

33. In February 2010, the Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning launched the Labour Market Framework with the (then) Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, setting out plans that include reducing the number of people who are unemployed or economically inactive.²⁸ The Minister’s announcement of a Joint Operational Plan with the Department for Work and Pensions in April 2010 formalised arrangements for the planning and delivery of policy and programmes where there is a joint responsibility. In the written statement, the Minister said that:

“We want to focus actions on the delivery of programmes to tackle youth unemployment and long-term unemployment. We want to enable all disadvantaged groups to enter the labour market through diversity of programme delivery; we want to

²⁶ The Department for Work and Pensions was created in June 2001 and is responsible for welfare and pension policy. It is the largest public service delivery department in the UK and has specific responsibility for young people claiming Jobseekers’ Allowance

²⁷ Jobcentre Plus is an executive agency of the Department for Work and Pensions that helps people into work and employers fill their vacancies

²⁸ Joint Operational Plan for Wales, Cabinet Written Statement, 27 April 2010

provide the skilled workforce that employers need; and we want to maximise opportunities created through regeneration.”

34. The coalition agreement²⁹ of the new UK Government stated that:

“We will end existing welfare to work programmes and create a single welfare to work programme to help all unemployed people get back to work.”

35. Written evidence submitted by the Department for Work and Pensions and JobCentre Plus stated that the UK Government’s new vision for 21st century welfare reform will include the creation of a Work Programme that offers personalised help for all benefit claimants who are out of work, including young people,³⁰ but that the Young Person’s Guarantee will be maintained until the Work Programme is introduced. The evidence went on to state that the Secretary of State will consult the Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning throughout the development of the Work Programme.³¹

Other strategies

36. There are a myriad of more local strategies relating to young people not in education, employment or training. During the Committee’s visit to Info-Nation in Swansea we heard that the local authority’s NEET Project, under the Local Service Board/ Children and Young People’s Programme, aims to support young people aged 16 to 18 into sustained education, employment or training. It has been operating for two years and covers all Swansea secondary schools, units and pupils educated other than at school. The Project is delivered through a multi-agency partnership and is hosted by Careers Wales West, including the staff employed by the local authority. We heard that the local authority’s strategy³² for reducing the number of young people aged 16 to 18 not in education, employment or training consisted of a number of initiatives. We were informed that these included a multi-agency response; a robust evidence base for informing planning and intervention; early identification of those “at risk” of not being in education, employment or training in Year 11; intervention and prevention work; targeted engagement programmes during the Easter and summer holidays; outreach work; and an

²⁹ The Coalition: our programme for government, Cabinet Office, May 2010

³⁰ Department for Work and Pensions and JobCentre Plus written evidence page 2

³¹ Department for Work and Pensions and JobCentre Plus written evidence page 3

³² Finding a Future: A Swansea strategy to reduce young people aged 16-18 years not in education, employment or training

integrated service delivery approach to providing specialist support and advice. The percentage of Year 11 leavers in Swansea not in education, employment or training has dropped from 10.8 per cent in 2006 to 6.7 per cent in 2009.

37. One of the main issues to emerge from our visit to Swansea was the complexity of programmes and projects aimed at young people not in education, employment or training – Careers Wales West uses its resources to provide Careers Advisers in schools and to track and support young people post-16; the 14-19 Partnership provides some funding and outreach workers; EU Convergence funding (through ENGAGE) will be used to target and support young people aged 14 to 19 in Swansea who are at risk of being not in education, employment or training; the Youth Service employs outreach workers; the Genesis project also has posts to target “core” young people not in education, employment or training; while the EU Convergence Reach the Heights³³ initiative funds a number of small projects. The key point that struck us, however, was how the local authority was bringing together all these different strands and focusing on the individual needs of the young person. A note of our visit and our conversations with the young people we met at Info-Nation is included in the list of oral evidence at the end of this report.

38. We believe that the targeted, multi-agency and interventionist approach developed in the City and County of Swansea, as evidenced in our visit to Info-Nation, has achieved positive outcomes.

We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government evaluate local authority and regional approaches to addressing the issue of young people not in education, employment or training in order to develop a best practice model and guidance for delivering and monitoring effective services.

³³ Reach the Heights is a £49 million initiative launched in March 2009 to help around 30,000 young people in Wales improve their career opportunities. It is delivered by a range of partners and is funded through the European Social Fund, Welsh Assembly Government and associated sponsors

Making the current system work better

39. Our analysis of the evidence received during this inquiry has led us to identify some key areas for improving existing provision for young people not in education, employment or training. We have presented our findings under the following headings.

Continuum of support

40. In its written evidence, Careers Wales stated that in addressing issues for 16 to 24 year-olds not in education, training or employment, it was important to look at young people's experiences from a much younger age and how to "identify those who are in danger of becoming NEET."³⁴

41. CollegesWales³⁵ made a similar point when it wrote that:

"Many of those NEET will have been persistently absent from school. Thus a key focus must be on seeking ways of working with at-risk young people in school: prevention rather than cure."³⁶

42. The Welsh Local Government Association also raised the importance of joining up policies for 16 to 24 year-olds not in education, employment or training with policies for pre-16s "to reflect the fact that children and young people can become NEET at any time from 4-25."³⁷

43. The same point was made by the Association of Chief Police Officers Cymru,³⁸ and other witnesses. The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, for example, argued that early screening and identification of speech, language and communication needs and the provision of appropriate therapy support was a relatively modest cost compared with the long-term costs to society of not addressing those issues.³⁹

³⁴ Careers Wales written evidence page 1

³⁵ ColegauCymru/CollegesWales is the national organisation representing the 21 further education colleges and two further education institutions in Wales

³⁶ CollegesWales written evidence paragraph 8

³⁷ Welsh Local Government Association written evidence paragraph 5

³⁸ Association of Chief Police Officers Cymru written evidence page 2

³⁹ Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists written evidence paragraphs 3-8

44. We heard at first hand the disillusion and disengagement with learning that can happen early in young people's lives. The stories we heard from young people in Swansea were about poor learning experiences, mainly at the end of Key Stage 3, which was put down to a lack of respect between teacher and pupil, and a vicious circle of loss of confidence and further feelings of being unsupported and falling behind in their work. Yet we also heard accounts of where young people with dyslexia and dyspraxia had not received support sufficiently early in their schooling to enable them to continue with their studies.

45. Careers Wales told us that if better, more sustainable outcomes could be achieved for young people at the age of 16, "we would find that the problems at 17 and 18 were easier to overcome. All the research shows that sustainability is the issue, and the client journey is the difficulty."⁴⁰ Careers Wales also believed that there was "less concentrated" support for transition for young people aged 18 compared with the support received at age 16.⁴¹

46. At the same time, CollegesWales identified a need to ensure that the range of support offered to the 16 to 19 year-old target group "does not disappear at the age of 20."⁴² Rathbone Cymru told us that while attention tends to focus on the younger cohort of people not in education, employment or training, there also needed to be programmes for the 19-plus age group, tailored to address their particular needs.⁴³ Prince's Trust Cymru argued for a "joined-up package" of support for young people whether aged 14, 16 or 19-plus.⁴⁴

47. The proposed Rights of Children and Young People (Wales) Measure includes provision for consultation on the application of the proposed Measure to persons who have reached 18 but are not yet 25. The consideration of extending young people's Rights up to the age of 25 in Assembly legislation supports the Welsh Assembly Government's current approach of including people up to the age of 25 in its policies

⁴⁰ Record of Proceedings paragraph 16, 10 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

⁴¹ Record of Proceedings paragraph 27, 10 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

⁴² CollegesWales written evidence paragraph 16

⁴³ Record of Proceedings paragraph 150, 10 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

⁴⁴ Record of Proceedings paragraph 151, 10 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

for those not in education, employment or training, although we believe this needs to be formalised, as we discuss in paragraph 74 below.

48. As outlined in paragraphs 8 to 11 above, there are certain groups of young people who are more at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training. The Minister's written evidence acknowledged that although the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy for young people not in education, employment or training concentrates primarily on young people once they reach 16, "evidence has shown that early identification of young people who are at risk of becoming NEET is imperative to ensure they continue in learning."⁴⁵

49. We were therefore encouraged to hear from the Minister that:

"We cannot begin to address the issue when young people, at 16 or older, are absent from education, employment or training. We need to dig more deeply into the root causes and look at preventive action. In other words, we have to look at the issue holistically and identify how to address it from the earliest years, recognising all the while that there can be a variety of reasons why people fall out of education, employment or training."⁴⁶

50. Careers Wales recommended clear national guidelines should be developed "to allow a consistent approach to identification of those at risk of becoming NEET."⁴⁷

We recommend that one of the outcomes of the Minister's review of his Department's support for young people not in education, employment or training should be the development of clear, multi-agency guidelines to ensure practitioners adopt an early, consistent and holistic approach to identifying those at risk of disengaging or becoming not in education, employment or training, and that appropriate intervention is provided at an early stage.

51. Finally, evidence we received from Foster Care Associates Cymru outlined that looked-after young people are particularly likely not to be

⁴⁵ Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning written evidence page 3

⁴⁶ Record of Proceedings paragraph 127, 24 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

⁴⁷ Careers Wales written evidence paragraph C.3; Record of Proceedings paragraph 57, 10 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

in education, employment or training in the future and that of the 325 care leavers still in touch with Welsh local authorities on their 19th birthday, 165 were not in education, employment or training. The organisation also highlighted that accessing full-time education or higher education for care leavers can be a significant problem.⁴⁸

We recommend that the Welsh Government should review how effectively local authorities are implementing existing statutory requirements to support the education of care leavers up to the age of 25. The review should include evidence from care leavers who are within the further and higher education systems and those who are not in employment, education or training.

Choice in the curriculum

52. CollegesWales believed that young people should receive learning that promotes independence, confidence and decision-making.⁴⁹ The Minister referred to this evidence when he told us that:

“The reality is that people may want to go into carpentry, plumbing and so on, but they will need basic skills to carry out a number of the tasks associated with those vocations. It is important that we do not dumb down the curriculum in any way; it is about making the curriculum relevant in that context.”⁵⁰

53. Rathbone Cymru told us that:

“It is about having the flexibility within a broad education system – not just the mainstream schools – to have almost a safety-net approach, so that people do not feel that they are being left behind and stigmatised. People should have the chance to re-enter, catch up and readdress some of those background needs. Education is broader; it is not just about the subjects you study at school, but about your life, and preparing for adulthood, and recognising your individual needs in doing that.”⁵¹

⁴⁸ Foster Care Associates Cymru written evidence paragraphs 2, 4.1-5.2

⁴⁹ CollegesWales written evidence paragraph 10

⁵⁰ Record of Proceedings paragraph 150, 24 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

⁵¹ Record of Proceedings paragraph 155, 10 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

54. Llamau⁵² also argued for the need to offer the most disengaged young people a wider choice of options as to what and how they study to give them the relevant skills for progressing into sustained employment.⁵³ Careers Wales told us that:

“We need a relevant offer in terms of provision. I am talking about learning, work-based learning, schools and support. We need to look at what the learner needs and ensure that we understand his or her level of engagement. We need flexibility, we need to engage employers, and we need to look at the way that provision is commissioned and funded, because it is complicated, and there are lots of organisations commissioning provision for this group.”⁵⁴

55. Careers Wales went on to question whether:

“The learning styles are right for these young people or whether they are being asked to learn in a way that is too uniform across the board. Therefore, things such as extended work experience, where they get the chance to spend time with an employer, and programmes where further education offers pre-16 courses, often appeal and are successful with this group of young people.”⁵⁵

56. Careers Wales commented, however, on the “slightly scattergun approach” across different local authorities in Wales.⁵⁶ We were therefore interested to hear about Prince’s Trust Cymru’s xl programme that is run outside school for young people aged 14 to 16, which covers citizenship, enterprise and community projects, and in which the participants gain soft skills as well as applied numeracy and literacy.⁵⁷

⁵² Llamau is a young persons’ and women’s homeless charity that delivers services to vulnerable, socially excluded homeless and potentially homeless people in South Wales

⁵³ Llamau written evidence page 3

⁵⁴ Record of Proceedings paragraph 19, 10 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

⁵⁵ Record of Proceedings paragraph 28, 10 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

⁵⁶ Record of Proceedings paragraph 65, 10 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

⁵⁷ Record of Proceedings paragraphs 158-159, 10 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

57. Fairbridge De Cymru⁵⁸ also has a good track record in running programmes. We were told that 72 per cent of the young people it worked with last year went on to achieve at least one positive outcome, such as returning to the classroom, starting a college course or attaining a qualification.

We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government should consider how best to extend and fund the good practice of programmes run by third sector organisations across the whole of Wales, in conjunction with and to complement the programmes of local and school authorities.

Continuity of opportunities

58. Evidence submitted by the National Training Federation for Wales stated that SkillBuild has made a significant contribution in Blaenau Gwent to reducing the percentage of young people not in education, employment or training from 9.1 per cent in 2008 to 6.6 per cent in 2009.⁵⁹

59. Young people in Swansea who had attended the SkillBuild course to improve their soft/basic skills told us they felt it had been a positive experience, although there was some disillusion that there had been no job opportunities available after the 13-week placement had come to an end. Concern about the general lack of apprenticeship opportunities was expressed by many of the young people and their project workers. “Just give us a job,”⁶⁰ we were told.

60. This “revolving door” syndrome of young people moving from provider to provider without any forward progression needs to be broken.

61. Careers Wales raised the importance of improving work-based learning provision for young people who have learning difficulties and disabilities. While there may be courses available in the further

⁵⁸ Fairbridge De Cymru written evidence page 2. Fairbridge De Cymru is a national charity that works with young people facing or at risk of falling out of education, employment or training

⁵⁹ National Training Federation for Wales written evidence paragraph 1.3

⁶⁰ Comment from young people at Info-Nation, Swansea, 17 June 2010

education sector, we heard there was a need to get employers more involved in those schemes.⁶¹

We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government work with partners in both the public and third sectors to involve employers at an early stage in working with learners, learning coaches and others so that there is a more joined-up approach to helping young people progress into securing employment or apprenticeship opportunities, and particularly in providing work-based learning opportunities for young people who have additional learning needs.

Coherence of strategy

62. In its written evidence Fairbridge De Cymru stated that solving the problem of young people not in education, employment or training called for a holistic approach, addressing the overall needs of the communities in which those young people lived – such as issues surrounding child poverty, health and well being, education and transport.⁶²

63. Fairbridge acknowledged that a number of Welsh Assembly Government initiatives had made a positive impression, and that strategy at a Ministerial and senior official level was well articulated, but it considered that the programmes and initiatives were “numerous, overlapping and somewhat uncoordinated” because there were too few resources to ensure they were “linked and tailored to contribute to the strategy.”⁶³

64. Rathbone Cymru also stated that programmes focused at specific “at risk” groups were not as formalised or accessible as they should be and that a number “seem to work in isolation and are failing to develop links into some areas of mainstream provision.”⁶⁴

65. Careers Wales stated in its written evidence that since the publication of the Welsh Assembly Government’s NEETs strategy in 2009, “progress has been patchy in terms of taking action and establishing a clear way forward for Wales although the pace appears

⁶¹ Record of Proceedings paragraph 59, 10 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

⁶² Fairbridge De Cymru written evidence page 3

⁶³ Fairbridge De Cymru written evidence page 3

⁶⁴ Rathbone Cymru written evidence page 3

to be quickening now with Task and Finish groups reporting to the Minister.”⁶⁵

66. In its written evidence, Careers Wales argued that many stakeholders were looking to the Welsh Assembly Government for “more leadership and direction,” and that:

“The lack at both national and local level of a joined-up strategy and policy, coordination and planning means that resources are not being maximised. It sometimes appears that various WAG departments are unclear about how initiatives across the Welsh Assembly Government relate to each other.”⁶⁶

67. Careers Wales therefore recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government should further develop the recent cross-departmental strategic response to Youth Unemployment in partnership with external lead organisations to “achieve a coordinated joined-up approach, minimising duplication and building on identified good practice.” Careers Wales also suggested that because the landscape of provision for young people not in education, employment or training aged 16 to 18 is complex, there should be a single agency to coordinate support and help ensure that agencies communicate effectively with each other.⁶⁷

“In Careers Wales, we think that local authorities should do it for pre-16s, it should be Careers Wales for those who are between 16 and 18 years of age, and it should be JobCentre Plus for people who are 18 and over.”⁶⁸

68. Careers Wales went on to state that:

“It is recommended that strategic partnerships/fora focused on the NEET agenda should be rolled out at a national and regional level, chaired and coordinated by the lead organisations. Regional strategies should be based on a national strategy developed in partnership by Welsh Assembly Government and external agencies.”⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Careers Wales written evidence paragraph A.1.1

⁶⁶ Careers Wales written evidence paragraph A.1.3

⁶⁷ Careers Wales written evidence paragraph A.2.1

⁶⁸ Record of Proceedings paragraph 86, 10 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

⁶⁹ Careers Wales written evidence paragraph E.3

69. Careers Wales later told us that following the Welsh Assembly Government’s strategy to reduce the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training there had been “no detailed implementation plan to clarify the responsibilities of each partner and organisation that works with people, who are responsible for supporting them into education and training programmes.” Careers Wales therefore called for “greater clarification and clearer direction, not only as regards strategic direction, but also to make it quite clear who is responsible for what, bearing in mind that we have to work in partnership.”⁷⁰

70. In its written evidence, CollegesWales endorsed two recommendations of the Wales Employment and Skills Board 2010 Annual Report for “a whole-government, multi-departmental response to tackle youth unemployment” and “an overall Youth Engagement Strategy in receipt of stable funding, aimed at tackling disengagement at a pre-school leaving age.”⁷¹ CollegesWales too agreed with the recommendation for a lead agency “to minimise complexity and overlap,” and also to monitor progress and make changes where necessary.⁷²

71. Rathbone Cymru believed it was “proper that the responsibility for NEET rests with one government department”, but that “there is the need for cross-departmental working.”⁷³

72. ConstructionSkills Wales believed that:

“Tackling the NEET agenda in Wales is not and should not wholly rest with one particular department or policy team. There should be one organisation or body (not necessarily a newly created body) which would be able to coordinate a range of education and employment options for young people who are NEET.”⁷⁴

It concluded that Careers Wales would be “best suited” to take on such a role.

⁷⁰ Record of Proceedings paragraph 29, 10 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

⁷¹ CollegesWales written evidence paragraphs 22 and 25

⁷² CollegesWales written evidence paragraphs 28-29

⁷³ Rathbone Cymru written evidence page 2

⁷⁴ ConstructionSkills Wales written evidence page 3

73. We welcomed references in the Minister's written evidence that his officials were working with the Economic Renewal Cabinet Committee to consider the effectiveness of interventions that provide support for all workless people, including those aged 16 to 24. The stated intention was to "simplify and, where possible, integrate programmes."⁷⁵ We support the Minister in his efforts to bring together Government departments on this issue, but given the complexity of the whole system we wish to see this approach go much further.

We recommend that because the issue of young people not in education, employment or training cuts across a range of Welsh Assembly Government Departments and policies, there should be one Minister who will lead on the coordination of strategy and action plans, monitor implementation, and be accountable at a national level.

74. In order to align Welsh Assembly Government strategies in this area, the current target for reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training also needs to be reviewed, particularly in the context of the current economic situation. The last time Welsh Ministers set a target was in 2006 and for 16 to 18 year-olds only.

We recommend that Welsh Ministers should review and update the existing strategy for young people not in education, employment or training so that it covers the 16 to 25 age group, and that they should introduce a new national target for reducing the proportion of 16 to 25 year-olds not in education, employment or training, ensuring that all relevant Government Departments be responsible for its delivery.

Collaboration between agencies

75. The Minister's written evidence stated that Children and Young People's Partnerships were the vehicle for coordinating local delivery against Welsh Assembly Government policy.⁷⁶ Yet some witnesses expressed concern that those partnerships are voluntary, that their membership does not include the wide range of agencies that can impact on young people who are not in education, employment or

⁷⁵ Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning written evidence page 5

⁷⁶ Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning written evidence page 7

training,⁷⁷ and that there are differences between areas in who takes the lead.

76. Indeed, one of the main findings of our visit to Info-Nation in Swansea was that local collaboration between agencies and partners is ad hoc, dependent on the robustness of individual relationships. There were calls for a better, more organised system to be put in place.

77. The Welsh Local Government Association argued that:

“At a local level, strategies are being developed at different stages and from different points of origin: either the Children and Young People’s Partnerships or the 14-19 Networks. This in itself is not a particular concern but there is a lack of guidance as to which organisations should be included in strategies, or leading on this work.”⁷⁸

78. We have noted the body of concern that at a local level the relevant agencies should be working more collaboratively and in a more coordinated way to achieve the best outcomes for young people not in education, employment or training.

As part of our recommended evaluation of local authority and regional approaches to addressing the issue of young people not in education, employment or training, we recommend that Welsh Ministers should identify at local level a lead agency for young people not in education, employment or training. This agency should coordinate partnerships, identify responsibilities, manage the journey for young people from one stage to the next, and monitor performance.

79. Given that Careers Wales could be a candidate for playing a lead agency role, we are concerned to ensure that the Welsh Assembly Government’s current review of the organisation should not result in any loss of Careers Wales’s expertise in this area or its progress in working in partnership with other bodies.

⁷⁷ CollegesWales written evidence paragraph 31

⁷⁸ Welsh Local Government Association written evidence paragraph 8

Cross-border cooperation

80. In paragraph 33 we referred to the Joint Operational Plan that exists between the Welsh Assembly Government and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the role of JobCentre Plus (JCP).

81. DWP and JCP stated in their joint written evidence that they have a “productive relationship” with the Welsh Assembly Government, which “involves a high degree of collaboration and partnership working,” and that they collaborate to provide a range of universal provision that can be accessed by young people who are not in education, employment or training.⁷⁹

82. Yet Prince’s Trust Cymru stated in its written evidence that the relationship between Welsh Assembly Government, Department for Work and Pensions and JobCentre Plus was:

“An area where the building blocks are in place but the mortar between the bricks is missing.”

83. Careers Wales and JobCentre Plus operate under a memorandum of understanding to recognise and respect each other’s statutory roles and remits. Careers Wales stated in its evidence that:

“Effective and appropriate development of Department of Work and Pensions and JobCentre Plus policy in Wales is challenging as it has often been developed in England where the policy and provision landscape is different. It should not be transferred to Wales without careful consideration.”⁸⁰

84. Fairbridge De Cymru was critical of JobCentre Plus’s referral process. It thought that while the policies, opportunities and benefits of referral were understood at a managerial level, the high turnover of frontline staff, who were also “under considerable pressure,” meant such detail was often missed or misunderstood; as a result, young people were “shoe-horned into the wrong type of provision.”⁸¹

85. Rathbone Cymru told us that its dealings with JobCentre Plus at a local level could be “incredibly frustrating” because any programme between two and five weeks in length for young people aged 18 and

⁷⁹ Department for Work and Pensions and JobCentre Plus written evidence pages 4-5

⁸⁰ Careers Wales written evidence paragraph B.1

⁸¹ Fairbridge De Cymru written evidence pages 3-4

over could adversely affect their benefits.⁸² A similar point was made in evidence submitted by Barnardo's Cymru,⁸³ and by young people themselves on our visit to Info-Nation in Swansea.

86. In its supplementary evidence, Rathbone Cymru argued that “the Skills agenda is devolved, but the work agenda is not – perhaps resulting at times in these not fully linking us in such a way as not to be able to achieve full impact on the lives of the people they seek to support.”⁸⁴

87. Indeed, our own questioning of JobCentre Plus revealed that it was aware that “the way in which we handle young people is not perfect,” and that there were “fractures in that process that we could work better on.”⁸⁵ The current lack of data sharing between Careers Wales and JobCentre Plus⁸⁶ was, in our view, yet more evidence of the weakness of the current system and the need for a single structure to bring the agenda together in a coherent way.

88. It also concerned us that JobCentre Plus was also not aware of European Structural Fund projects such as Genesis 2⁸⁷ or projects for young people not in education, employment or training such as the Keeping in Touch partnership we visited in Swansea.⁸⁸ To our minds, this compounds other evidence we have received about the lack of evaluation and dissemination of good practice between different local areas (see paragraph 114).

89. On the basis of the evidence we received we are very concerned about the general working relationships between UK and Welsh Assembly Government Departments, their agencies and their various practices. We believe that Welsh Ministers have a job to do to impress upon their UK Government counterparts the necessity of having programmes for unemployed young people in Wales that are designed to meet local needs and delivery mechanisms, and that the UK-wide

⁸² Record of Proceedings paragraph 168, 10 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

⁸³ Barnardo's Cymru written evidence paragraph 3.3

⁸⁴ Rathbone Cymru letter dated 6 July 2010

⁸⁵ Record of Proceedings paragraph 75, 24 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

⁸⁶ Record of Proceedings paragraph 77, 24 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

⁸⁷ Record of Proceedings paragraph 111, 24 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

⁸⁸ Record of Proceedings paragraph 42, 24 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

agencies operating in Wales are better informed about the landscape of provision here.

We recommend that Ministers should review the adequacy of the existing constitutional arrangement for the Department for Work and Pensions and JobCentre Plus in a devolved context and work with their UK counterparts on making the necessary changes to ensure the arrangement is more effective in future.

90. We were encouraged, however, to hear of JobCentre Plus outreach workers.⁸⁹ We heard from young people and project workers in Swansea how face-to-face contact is a much more effective approach in helping individuals along the journey of finding education or employment.

We recommend that Welsh Ministers work with UK colleagues to ensure that personal advisers and outreach workers form a central, rather than marginal, element of JobCentre Plus's activity in order to improve the effectiveness of its engagement programmes.

91. On another issue, CollegesWales reported that colleges in Wales have found it difficult to win contracts from the Department for Work and Pensions to support disadvantaged learners because those contracts have tended to be awarded to big private training providers that cover both sides of the Wales/England border. The organisation therefore asked for clarification on how Welsh colleges could bid for contracts in future.⁹⁰

92. A number of witnesses also criticised the lack of cross-sector representation on the Joint Employment Delivery Board for Wales that developed the Joint Operational Plan.⁹¹

93. As regards the development of the UK Government's new Work Programme (see paragraphs 34 to 35 above), we are concerned to ensure that the long-term problem of young people not in education, employment or education will not be overwhelmed by the possible

⁸⁹ Record of Proceedings paragraph 100, 24 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

⁹⁰ CollegesWales written evidence paragraph 20

⁹¹ Careers Wales written evidence paragraph B.3; CollegesWales, Record of Proceedings paragraph 129, 10 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

increase in numbers of unemployed young people in the context of the current economic climate.⁹²

94. On the basis of conversations we had with young people in Swansea, particularly those coming out of referral units, we were also concerned about re-entry success rates for groups such as young ex-offenders and whether they could be given greater help if they needed it in terms of training and education.⁹³

We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government work with the Department for Work and Pensions to ensure that in the eventuality of larger numbers of young unemployed people applying for assistance under the future Work Programme, those in Wales who are most disadvantaged do not lose out, and that those in greatest need can be fast-tracked for more intensive support.

Coordination of European funded projects

95. Careers Wales made the point that the availability of European Union Structural Funds to support the not in education, employment or training agenda “has resulted in a proliferation of agencies and projects working with the client group.” It also argued that the outcome measures from EU funded projects does not always equate with Welsh Assembly Government objectives (e.g. while a young person might be “engaged” with a funded project, that did not equate with progression into the labour market).⁹⁴ Careers Wales suggested that the various EU funded initiatives in place should be better linked with those offered by statutory agencies,⁹⁵ and it cited Wrexham as an example of good practice where partners have worked together to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training at 16.

96. The Welsh Local Government Association commented that projects funded under the European Structural Fund Convergence Programme are causing particular concern for local authorities. The WLGA argued that Reaching the Heights projects, for example, may

⁹² Record of Proceedings paragraphs 24-27, 24 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

⁹³ Record of Proceedings paragraph 57, 24 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

⁹⁴ Careers Wales written evidence paragraph D.1

⁹⁵ Careers Wales written evidence paragraph A.2.1

not fit strategically with Children and Young People’s Partnerships Plans and priorities, or they may even duplicate existing services.⁹⁶

97. Prince’s Trust Cymru referred to the lack of any strategic analysis of need on a geographical basis so that when organisations submitted funding bids – “independently and in competition with each other” – there was “often a plethora of similar provision funded for NEETs in the same area with delivery taking place at the same time.” It cited a recent experience in Pembrokeshire where an Arts Council of Wales Reach the Heights programme for young people not in education, employment or training had had surplus places.⁹⁷

98. We therefore welcome comments in the Minister’s written evidence that his officials are working with the Economic Renewal Committee and the Welsh European Funding Office to “ensure regional and local provision continues to add value to mainstream provision and does not duplicate or leave any gaps.”⁹⁸

99. We believe there is a need for a mechanism that can identify gaps in provision, coordinate the commissioning of services and avoid duplication between different agencies, based on the evaluation of local authority and regional approaches to addressing the issue of young people not in education, employment or training as we recommended in paragraph 38 above.

We recommend that in order to engender a culture of collaboration rather than competition the Welsh Assembly Government should work with local, regional and national agencies to coordinate the delivery of European Union and non-EU funded projects for young people not in education, employment or training.

Cultivating the skills

100. In our conversations with young people in Swansea, we heard that they wanted further education institutions to provide greater flexibility with starting dates throughout the year, a view shared by the Association of School and College Leaders Cymru / National

⁹⁶ Welsh Local Government Association written evidence paragraphs 9-10

⁹⁷ Prince’s Trust Cymru written evidence paragraph 4

⁹⁸ Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning written evidence page 5

Association of Headteachers.⁹⁹ Careers Wales stated in its written evidence that progress was being made in this area, but the approach needed to become more common practice.¹⁰⁰

101. Written evidence from Action for Children commented on the:

“Huge shortage of work placements, a shortage of schemes to match the interests of young people and most training providers are ill equipped to support young people with multiple difficulties.”¹⁰¹

102. Careers Wales argued that approaching individual employers to encourage them to provide young people with job opportunities was a more successful approach than national marketing campaigns. The organisation also highlighted the lack of progression for learners onto apprenticeship programmes.¹⁰²

103. Fairbridge De Cymru highlighted the need for young people to receive “soft skills” in order to progress successfully within the employment spectrum as:

“All too often we see young people being sent to training providers who are not ready to engage at that level of learning. This results in them dropping out and either being lost in the system or sent around the system again to face continual feelings of failure.”¹⁰³

104. This view accords with one of the findings from our conversations with young people in Swansea. However, Fairbridge De Cymru,¹⁰⁴ Rathbone Cymru¹⁰⁵ and Llamau¹⁰⁶ argued that the current focus on measurable rather than qualitative outcomes was instead biased towards the delivery of accredited qualifications rather than softer skills development, such as changes in attitudes and personal development.

⁹⁹ Association of School and College Leaders Cymru / National Association of Headteachers written evidence paragraph 9.c

¹⁰⁰ Careers Wales written evidence paragraph A.3.1

¹⁰¹ Action for Children written evidence paragraph 3.3

¹⁰² Careers Wales written evidence paragraph A.3.1

¹⁰³ Fairbridge De Cymru written evidence page 4

¹⁰⁴ Fairbridge De Cymru written evidence page 4

¹⁰⁵ Rathbone Cymru written evidence page 1

¹⁰⁶ Llamau written evidence page 2

We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government should review how the acquisition of “soft skills” for young people not in education, employment or training – and those at risk of becoming so – could be given greater recognition within education, employment and training settings.

Coaching support

105. CollegesWales stated that:

“It is essential that there are sufficient numbers of well trained learning coaches and others with appropriate skills giving support to young people over housing, finances and drug misuse. Those giving support must themselves be entitled to a clear career path with continuing professional development opportunities to ensure that they perform to the highest standards.”¹⁰⁷

106. The Association of School and College Leaders Cymru / National Association of Headteachers stressed the importance of funding learning coach support interventions in secondary schools and colleges because “an investment at this stage will contribute significantly to improving the country’s future overall economic situation.”¹⁰⁸

107. The importance of having intensive support for young people was stressed by a number of organisations in their evidence to us,¹⁰⁹ particularly for the hardest to reach groups. The feeling that some young people have been totally abandoned by the system came through very strongly in the conversations we had with groups in Swansea. We were therefore interested in the Minister’s comment about the need for “trusted guides” who could give individual support to young people in the choices they make.¹¹⁰

We recommend that the Welsh Assembly Government should ensure that engagement or outreach coaches are available to intervene at any stage in a young person’s life to give direct

¹⁰⁷ CollegesWales written evidence paragraph 24

¹⁰⁸ Association of School and College Leaders Cymru / National Association of Headteachers written evidence paragraph 9.a

¹⁰⁹ Big Lottery Fund written evidence paragraph 1.2; Foster Care Associates Cymru written evidence paragraph 3.2

¹¹⁰ Record of Proceedings paragraph 158, 24 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

support on a range of family, finance, education, employment or health related issues.

Conclusions

108. The number of young people who are not in education, employment or training is substantial – almost 70,000 of those aged 16 to 24, affecting over one in five people aged 19 to 24.

109. While the causes of young people not being in education, employment or training are complex, that should not excuse the extreme complexity of the current system for serving those young people. In our view, that complexity leads to ineffectiveness and inefficiency.

110. There is a need for a more holistic approach. There needs to be a better understanding of the extent and nature of the issue and all policies and interventions that impact on these young people need to be coherent, linked and aligned within an overarching framework of clear objectives and targets.

111. We started this inquiry by focusing on young people aged 16 to 24, but we quickly became aware that we needed to take a broader view as many young people do not attend school from a much earlier age, some as young as four.

112. What we are certain about is that there are adverse, long-term impacts on the Welsh economy and on the life chances of young people who fall out of education, employment or training. We agree with witnesses that prevention rather than cure will be essential in reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training in Wales, and so helping address interrelated issues such as social justice, mental health and substance abuse.¹¹¹ In the context of a challenging financial environment, it is even more important to ensure strategies are effectively and efficiently implemented on the ground.

¹¹¹ ConstructionSkills Wales written evidence page 1

113. CollegesWales believed that policies to bring many of these young people into the mainstream needed to be “innovative and radical”.¹¹² Yet Careers Wales told us that:

“We know what works. There is enough research out there to tell us what works. There is lots of good practice in Wales. We need outreach and engagement with this group if we are not in touch. We need to identify their individual needs...We need a better partnership arrangement, locally and nationally, with advocacy and brokerage for these young people, and the crucial transition support when they move from one stage to the next. Research has shown that incentives and rewards for these young people are important. So is effective staffing, with the right skills and qualifications, and a clear view of the outcomes that people want to achieve.”¹¹³

114. Although we heard from this one witness that we “know what works” in Wales, we heard evidence from others that information on policies and good practice is not necessarily shared as well as it could be. We also received evidence that the approach taken to funding projects for young people not in education, employment or training through the Convergence Programme is not as joined-up as it could be and that it has contributed to a duplication of provision.

115. In the meantime, youth disengagement and unemployment are an increasing problem, which because of their complexity, cannot be addressed by treating young people as a single group. Instead it requires the young person to be placed at the centre so that individual needs can be identified and met.¹¹⁴ Targeted, intensive, personal support as well as face-to-face careers advice and guidance are all essential ingredients for a more effective system.

116. It seems to us there is no shortage of aspiration or strategies for young people in Wales not in education, employment or training, but there is a need for more effective action on the ground – better partnership working and collaboration between different agencies to ensure a continuum of support, and coordination between different programmes. The Welsh Assembly Government’s preferred approach

¹¹² CollegesWales written evidence paragraph 8

¹¹³ Record of Proceedings paragraph 19, 10 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

¹¹⁴ Action for Children written evidence paragraph 3.2

of “collaborative working and a multi-agency”¹¹⁵ model is clearly not sufficient, however.

117. Certainly, there needs to be diversity of provision so that young people who view statutory provision with suspicion can be accommodated with providers with whom they feel comfortable.¹¹⁶ This means that collaboration between partners is vital to avoid competition and duplication of provision and resources.

118. However, we are convinced of the need for clearer, dedicated leadership – first at a national level to bring together, account for, and monitor this agenda, and secondly at local levels to galvanise and coordinate action between the different parties involved and to provide strong, consistent, long-term intervention and support. Currently, no one body is responsible or accountable, either nationally or locally. This situation has to change.

119. It is deeply worrying that so many of our young people are still being failed by the system. We trust that the recommendations in this report will encourage Welsh Ministers to bring forward proposals for a more effective service for those who find themselves not in education, employment or training. Integration between the economic development, education and skills agendas is vital if we are to ensure that our young people have the knowledge and skills base that can sustain them throughout their lives.

¹¹⁵ Record of Proceedings paragraph 131, 24 June 2010, Enterprise and Learning Committee

¹¹⁶ Big Lottery Fund written evidence paragraph 1.2

Witnesses

The following witnesses provided oral evidence to the Committee on the dates noted below. Transcripts of all oral evidence sessions and related written submissions can be viewed in full by following the attached links.

10 June 2010	http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=186396&ds=7/2010
Careers Wales	http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=184633&ds=7/2010
CollegesWales	http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=184799&ds=7/2010
Rathbone Cymru	http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=184804&ds=7/2010
Rathbone Cymru supplementary evidence	http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=191138&ds=7/2010
Fairbridge De Cymru	http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=184560&ds=7/2010

Prince's Trust
Cymru

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=184570&ds=7/2010>

17 June 2010

Focus groups of
young people at
Info-Nation,
Swansea

[Note of the Enterprise and Learning Committee's Visit to Info-Nation, Swansea](#)

24 June 2010

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=188882&ds=7/2010>

Department for
Work and Pensions /
JobCentre Plus

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=187123&ds=7/2010>

Minister for
Children, Education
and Lifelong
Learning (Welsh
Assembly
Government)

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=187134&ds=7/2010>

List of written evidence

The following people and organisations provided written evidence to the Committee. All written evidence can be viewed in full by following the attached links.

Organisation	Evidence
Action for Children	http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-inquiry/el3_inq_neet_responses/el3_neets2.htm
Association of Chief Police Officers Cymru	http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-inquiry/el3_inq_neet_responses/el3_neets1.htm
Association of School and College Leaders Cymru / National Association of Headteachers	http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=184576&ds=7/2010
Association of Teachers and Lecturers	http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-inquiry/el3_inq_neet_responses/el3_neets3.htm
Barnardo's Cymru	http://www.assemblywales.org/barnardo_s_cymru2.doc.pdf

Big Lottery Fund	http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-inquiry/el3_inq_neet_responses/el3_neets4.htm
Chwarae Teg	http://www.assemblywales.org/el_6_-_chwarae_teg.pdf
ConstructionSkills Wales	http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-agendas.htm?act=dis&id=184582&ds=7/2010
Dr Francis B Cowe, University of Wales, Newport	http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-inquiry/el3_inq_neet_responses/el3_neets12.htm
Cymorth Cymru	http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-inquiry/el3_inq_neet_responses/el3_neets5.htm
e-skills UK	http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-inquiry/el3_inq_neet_responses/el3_neets6.htm
Estyn (Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales)	http://www.assemblywales.org/10_-_estyn_-_hmci_response.pdf

Foster Care Associates Cymru	http://www.assemblywales.org/11_-_foster_care_associates_cymru_submission.pdf
Llamau	http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-inquiry/el3_inq_neet_responses/el3_neets7.htm
National Deaf Children's Society	http://www.assemblywales.org/13_-_ndcs_cymru.pdf
National Training Federation for Wales	http://www.assemblywales.org/14_-_ntfw.pdf
Royal College of Speech Language Therapists	http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-inquiry/el3_inq_neet_responses/el3_neets8.htm
Sandra Young	http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-inquiry/el3_inq_neet_responses/el3_neets13.htm
Skill Wales	http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-inquiry/el3_inq_neet_responses/el3_neets9.htm
Welsh Local Government Association	http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-inquiry/el3_inq_neet_responses/el3_neets11.htm

Working Links

http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-inquiry/el3_inq_neet_responses/el3_neets15.htm