



SCARRED FOR LIFE?

Literature Review



Introduction

In April 2014, Young Women's Trust launched its 'Scarred for Life?' Inquiry to understand the immediate and long term impact on young women of being out of work, education and training. This Literature Review sets out the policy context for the Inquiry and its final recommendations.

The persistently high rate of young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) is a concern which, along with the related problem of youth unemployment is occupying a large amount of policy space (e.g. BIS 2013; Mirza-Davies, 2014). A key reason for this is the significant costs for the individual and wider economy (Macmillan, 2012; ACEVO, 2012; and Coles et al, 2010). Further concerns centre on (for example Coles et al 2010, Brown and Hesketh, 2004) the social impact of a large NEET cohort, including negative consequences for physical and mental health and also on the number of young people involved in criminal activity.

This review of existing literature looks to explore the relationship between the growth of NEETs as a concept, impact on individuals and society as well as the current and future policy solutions. Given Young Women's Trust's specific concerns regarding the impact being NEET has on young women, this review has a clear focus on the literature surrounding gender and worklessness.

Headlines

1. Amongst 18-24 year olds, there are more young women NEET than young men and this has been consistently the case for at least the last decade.

- The latest figures (October-December 2014) show there are 428,000 young women aged 18-24 who are NEET accounting for 18.2% of women from that age group ⁱ
- The corresponding figure for men aged 18-24 is 310,000 (12.8%).ⁱⁱ
- The female figure has remained higher than the male figure consistently for the past 15 years- the average since the beginning of 2000 has been 434,000 (19.3%) for women and 295,000 (13.1%) for men.ⁱⁱⁱ

2. The impact is personal and social as well as immediate and long term

- The expected cost to the economy of youth unemployment in 2012 was £10.7 billion with further costs of £28 billion over the next decade. ^{iv}
- At the age of 30, women who have spent time unemployed before they are 25 can expect to earn £1,800 less per year than other women. Men who have been in a similar situation can expect to earn £3,400 less than other men ^v
- Following the convention of using male full time employment as a benchmark (as with gender pay gap studies) these figures imply that a women who has spent time unemployed before she is 25 will earn on average £14,000 less than a man who has spent no time in youth unemployment ^{vi}
- 40% of jobless people have symptoms of mental illness with the long term unemployed twice as likely to be prescribed anti-depressants compared to 25% of the general population ^{vii}

3. Young Women's Trust has conducted a comprehensive review of the literature and has found significant gaps in understanding of the following areas:

a. Why young people become and remain NEET

There is a wealth of literature on the characteristics of the NEET population but less understanding of the how different factors combine. For example, low educational attainment, along with other factors makes someone more likely to be NEET. It is not clearly understood what these factors are or how and why they combine in to have such a significant impact on young people.

b. Why so many more young women become and remain NEET compared to young men

- In particular there has been very little attention given to why there are so many young women who are NEET.
- Despite girls outperforming boys at all levels of education, there are consistently more young women who are NEET than young men.
- Traditional explanations that the prime reason for this difference is due to motherhood are undermined by the fact that only 25% of NEETs young women are mothers.^{viii}

c. What works to reduce the numbers?

- Despite the attempts of successive Governments, total numbers of NEETs (18-24) have remained above 540,000 since the year 2000.^{ix} The numbers of young women NEET has was 18.2% in the final quarter of 2014- virtually the same level (18%) it was in the same quarter in 2000.
- The policy responses have tended to focus on strategic (funding and fiscal stimulus) and preventive (early intervention) approaches with less consideration of how to reintegrate the existing NEET cohort.

Summary

Defining NEET

1. This literature review seeks to understand the growth of the concept of NEETs as an alternative to original terminology of 'Status Zero' which, before the mid 1990s, was applied to the group of young people who were not employed and not accessing education or training opportunities. The term NEET now refers to 16-24 year olds who are not attached to the main labour market categories of employment, education or training.

Characteristics of NEET

2. Whilst those that are characterised as NEET fall into a broad group, it is possible to analyse the make-up of the group according to a number of different characteristics:

Gender

3. The latest available figures (October-December 2014) indicate that there are more young women (428,000) aged 18-24 who are NEET than young men (310,000). The NEET rates do show some annual and seasonal variation although the long term average for the past 15 years indicates that 435,000 young women were NEET (peaking at 581,000 in 2011) compared to 295,000 young men (peaking at 454,000 in 2011). Furthermore it seems the male rate has been more sensitive to underlying economic trends, tracking the overall male unemployment rates since 2004, whilst the female rate has remained static- the female rate was 18% in the final quarter of 2000 and today stands at 18.2%.

Socio economic status

4. The majority of NEETs (75%) come from the DE socio economic group - compared to 6% from the AB socio economic group. On current data, we would expect to find almost 550,000 young people NEET from the lowest economic groups compared with just 45,000 from the higher economic groups.

Ethnicity

5. The relationship between ethnicity and becoming NEET is currently unclear. Overall 80% of the NEET population is white and some studies show that white British people are 1.2 times more likely to be NEET. However census data indicates slightly elevated NEET levels for mixed race and black young people with significant regional and gender differences. There appear to be more young women NEET across all ethnic groups with the exception that more black men than black women are NEET. Overall it may be that statistical reviews offer limited understanding of the impact of ethnicity as they often rely on broad categories of ethnic groups which may mask underlying variation.

Geography

6. Cities with high levels of NEETs are primarily situated in the North in a band from Merseyside to Humberside with further pockets of high NEET levels in the West Midlands and the North East
7. The local authorities with the highest female NEET levels are Hartlepool; Walsall; North East Lincolnshire; Wolverhampton and; Barking and Dagenham

Why do people become NEET?

8. It is not clear exactly why a young person will become NEET. The literature suggests many factors that are associated with being NEET: these can be broadly categorised as: labour market structure; family and personal circumstances; social exclusion; and educational attainment. There is further evidence that the experience of these elements will also be exacerbated by gender.

Labour market structure

9. The persistently high levels of NEET, even during times of economic growth, indicate a structural element to the problem. The changing labour market is a key part of this structural challenge. For example, relatively high rates of worklessness amongst young people suggests there are a limited number of employment opportunities for them- competition with older and more experienced workers for a limited number of jobs has made it increasingly difficult for young people to break into the labour market.
10. There is also a strong preference amongst employers for recruiting people who have completed higher education, which intensifies the impact of those limits. Employers increasingly base recruitment on narrow criteria based on academic qualifications; young people who have not achieved these qualifications are more likely to struggle to enter the labour market and frequently end up locked out of employment.
11. Furthermore recent contraction in mid-level jobs has created more competition for work as well as a bottleneck which limits the opportunities for young people to progress. Recent labour market trends have seen growth in both high skilled, highly remunerated jobs and low skilled, low pay jobs. Whereas entry level jobs used to be the gateway to further opportunities, young people are increasingly finding themselves stuck in a cycle of low pay and no pay with little opportunity for progression.

Careers Advice

12. There is a broad consensus that the current state of careers advice for young people falls far short of what is needed. Almost a decade ago, the Women and Work Commission report (2006) called for careers advice that challenged gender stereotypes. More recently, in evidence to the Education Select Committee, the Secretary of State for Education acknowledged that 'there had never been a golden age of careers advice and guidance.' (Education Committee, 2015).
13. Since 2012, schools have had a duty to provide independent and impartial careers guidance. This was designed to make the delivery of guidance more responsive to the needs of pupils and to encourage schools to liaise with local employers. There is currently significant criticism of this approach from a range of sources and there is concern about the funding available to schools to deliver careers advice and guidance to a high standard.
14. The age at which careers advice is delivered is at the heart of many debates about current provision of careers advice and guidance. Some argue strongly that children and young people need to receive it near the start of Secondary education; others focus on the delivery to adults.
15. Additionally, recent debates have also highlighted the way that careers advice is often lacking in consistency and narrowly focussed on promoting higher education over vocational routes (Ofsted 2013, Education Select Committee 2013). This has the effect of further entrenching the idea that vocational routes are second best whilst also denying young people the support they need to make key decisions about their future.

Vocational training and Apprenticeships

16. Over the past decade, there has been a growing focus on apprenticeships, particularly with regards to their role as a potential solution to high levels of youth unemployment and worklessness. Within this context, there has been some debate about how to define apprenticeships. The Richard Review recommended that apprenticeships be only offered at Level 3 or above, with clear 'pre apprenticeship' routes put in place. Others have argued that vocational qualifications are an essential alternative route through education and into employment for young people and should not be limited to Level 3 as a minimum. The Wolf Review recommended that apprentices be given 'parity of esteem' with academic courses in order to help young people overcome the challenges of major structural changes in the UK economy and to ensure the development of high quality skills in young people.

17. There is a raft of literature which considers the drivers for young people's vocational choices. A report by the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion has shown that there is a mismatch between jobs available in the labour market and choice of apprenticeships. For example, in 2012, there were two jobs for every newly qualified construction worker whilst a newly qualified hairdresser was competing with four other hairdressers for each available job. In the 2012/13 academic year, almost two thirds of female apprentices worked in just 5 sectors (a similar proportion of men are spread across 10 sectors).

Pay of apprentices

18. Apprenticeship pay has also been controversial. The Low Pay Commission (LPC) has the remit to increase minimum rates of pay whilst balancing the potential impact on levels of employment. In March 2015 it decided to recommend modest increases in the apprenticeship rate of pay due to concerns that larger increases would deter employers from taking on apprentices. This is in line with the Richards review recommendation which suggests that lower rates of pay for apprenticeships can allow employers to cover the costs of their training and development. The LPC recommendation was over-ruled by the Chancellor.

Family and personal circumstances and social exclusion

19. Social exclusion is experienced in a number of ways by individuals and families. It can relate to absolute or relative poverty; it often determines the kind of work that people do, whether they have savings or own major assets such as their home. Social exclusion also appears to be linked to the level of engagement with local communities and whether people have a social network.
20. Social exclusion often sees people respond to an immediate need to stave off poverty by, for example, taking up low paid short term and precarious employment. Recent political debate has focussed on paid work as the most effective route out of poverty. However, the literature suggests that, in some circumstances, the nature of this work can lead to greater risk of workless periods as well as limited opportunities to progress.
21. The impact can be intergenerational: a young person whose parents have poor qualifications is thirteen times more likely to be on a poor career trajectory than those whose parents had high level qualifications.

Mental health

22. Poor mental health appears to be both cause and consequence of being NEET, particularly for those who are in this state for long periods. Studies have shown that as many as 40% of jobless people have symptoms of mental illness compared to 25% of the general population. Similarly the long term unemployed are twice as likely as other young people to have been prescribed anti-depressants. There is a gender divide here too, with young women more likely to suffer from low self-esteem, feel inferior to others or have been prescribed anti-depressants.

Educational attainment

23. Educational attainment is a critical factor associated with becoming NEET. A person with no qualifications is more likely to be on a poor career trajectory (either NEET, long term workless or a move away from actively seeking work) than someone who achieved 5 A*-C grades at GCSE
24. However, despite higher levels of achievement at all levels of education, young women are more likely to be NEET than young men. On average, young women perform better at GCSE, with 62% achieving A* to C grades including English and Maths compared to 57% for boys. Yet, at the end of compulsory education, there are still more than 130,000 young women who do not reach the target of five GCSEs A* to C, including English and Maths.

25. Even when young women do get the required grades they are still less likely to gain well-paid, secure employment. Whilst increasing educational attainment is an important goal and is shown to reduce the likelihood of becoming NEET, it appears to overlook other barriers to employment, particularly those related to gender.

Gender

26. Young women are more likely to become NEET and remain NEET for longer. The reasons for this are complex and include: direct discrimination; social structures which place an importance of women's role within the family; labour market structures which limit the options for many young women, as well as gendered careers advice which directs women into a narrow range of often insecure and low paid employment.
27. A strong minority of employers persist in preferring to employ young men over young women, whilst women returning to work after childbirth continue to find it difficult to assimilate into the workforce, often having to change sector or accept a reduction in pay in order to return to work.
28. Young women NEET are more likely to be economically inactive, whereby they are not actively seeking work, rather than unemployed where they will be making themselves available for work in the immediate future. The biggest reason for this inactivity is the need to care for children and other family members- a requirement that is greatly reduced or absent for a lot of young men.
29. Women are also more likely to be working in low paid, precarious employment than men. Evidence shows that whilst 27% of female employees are paid below the living wage, just 16% of male employees are in the same position. Whilst low pay does not specifically indicate precarious employment it is likely that these jobs will be the least secure and result in several periods of unemployment between low paid jobs, with expected negative impacts on mental and physical health.
30. It is likely that some of disparity in rates of employment between young men and young women is down to the careers advice they receive. Young women are more likely to enrol in apprenticeships in 'traditionally female' sectors and are less likely to study Science, Engineering and Maths based subjects which are in demand from many employers. The careers advice and guidance they receive, both at an early age and after they leave education (where available) reinforces this gender segregation and directly contributes to the gap in long term employment outcomes.

Impact

31. Being NEET is experienced in terms of economic, financial, social mobility, health and crime impacts. These are both a personal cost and a cost to society as a whole.

Economic and Financial

32. The expected cost to the economy of youth unemployment in 2012 was £10.7 billion with further costs of £28 billion over the next decade. These figures only account for those people claiming Job Seekers Allowance and therefore underestimate the potential for increased tax revenue if people – mainly women – who are currently classed as 'economically inactive' entered paid work.
33. Recent Resolution Foundation research has shown that young people have been particularly affected by falling incomes since the financial crisis, losing 12.5% in real terms. Being NEET also has a negative impact on young people's long term earning potential. Estimates suggest that individual earnings are between £1800 and £3400 lower than for someone who has not spent any time NEET. Significantly women have, on average, a greater number of periods out of the labour market, including periods spent NEET, which are longer in duration. This means the proportion of income lost is greater for women

34. There is extensive evidence showing that women are also more likely to get stuck in low pay for extended periods of their working lives. The Living Wage Commission has highlighted that 39% of women are paid below the living wage compared to 26% of men. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that 33% of women on low pay had spent 10 years in this situation compared to 21% of men; the JRF estimated twice as many young women as young men are stuck on low pay or have spent years cycling in and out of low paid work.
35. Evidence also shows that certain groups of young women are at greatest risk of being stuck on low pay. A recent report by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development reported that not only was getting stuck in low pay strongly correlated with being female but that being a young mother had an added impact. Young mothers account for almost a quarter of low paid people and they are more likely to be working part-time, have fewer qualifications and limited opportunities for progression.

Social Mobility

36. Being NEET can lead to forms of later disadvantage including more persistent unemployment, lower job security and low pay. For many, low pay is a life-long existence that passes from one generation to the next: for people of all ages, the majority of people in the bottom earning segments failed to move to higher earning segments throughout the course of their life. Furthermore, as many as 20% of those in the bottom earning segments dropped out of work altogether, damaging their chances of progress, limiting the future opportunities for them and their children.

Policy Responses

37. Whilst successive Governments have sought to reduce the number of NEETs with a range of strategic, preventive and reintegration approaches, there seems to have been an emphasis on strategic (funding and fiscal stimulus) and preventive (early intervention) and arguably less focus on reintegration approaches. Responses by the current Coalition Government have taken a broad approach to tackling the NEET problem. These include: raising the participation age, introducing the Youth Contract, setting up the Work Programme, the expansion of apprenticeships and mandatory work activity.

Literature Review

What is NEET?

History

38. Before the mid-1990s, young people who had fallen away from the labour market had been referred to as “Status Zero” (Simmons and Thompson, 2012). The term carried a huge stigma and painted a picture of a largely male group carrying labels of addiction and criminality. Newspapers at the time reinforced this stigma with the following appearing in the Independent in 1996:
39. *“He or she [although it is mainly young men] had a poor record at school with a history of truancy and would have left school at 16, drifting in and out of government training schemes. He spends the majority of his time with people of the same age, involved in crime and drug-taking, with no means of independent financial support, living in an inner-city area - probably a large council estate. He may well live at home but is on the brink of being kicked out as he will bring no wages and no benefits. His family can no longer afford him and the state offers him nothing. He will probably be homeless soon.*
- (Cooper, 1996)*
40. The term NEET therefore was an attempt, first used in a report by the Social Exclusion Unit in 1999, to develop positive action that did away with the stigma of the previous classifications. This stigma however remains (Grist et al, 2011; Thompson, 2011), with NEET still associated with criminality and idleness despite the category encompassing a wide range of people with varying life, educational and employment histories who become or remain NEET for a number of different reasons.

Defining NEET

41. The attraction of the term NEET lies in the apparent simplicity of identifying those young people, aged 16-24, who are not attached to the main labour market categories of employment, education or training. The term covers young people who are unemployed (but not students); those with long term sickness or disability; and people with caring responsibilities that prevent them working. (Furlong 2006). It also includes those who are unwillingly NEET because of earlier disadvantage and those who are actively making a choice to withdraw from employment, education or training because other life circumstances make it both possible and desirable (ibid.).
42. Furlong (2006) praises the inclusivity of the term as a way of ensuring marginalised groups receive ongoing attention whilst also critiquing the difficulty of formulating meaningful policy responses to tackle such a heterogeneous group. There is also some concern that there is a ‘missing middle’ of young people who, whilst not fitting traditional categories, remain in low level, precarious employment with financial security out of their reach (Roberts 2011).
43. Further criticism of the concept of ‘NEETs’ comes from the way it defines people by what they lack (Hayward et al, 2008). Through the use of this acronym, non-participation becomes attached to *personal* shortcomings overlooking the *social and economic* inequalities that contribute to young people being NEET (Simmons et al, 2014). It also exaggerates the levels of labour market distress by assuming all NEETs will have that status involuntarily and be struggling financially as a result (Philpot, 2011). Philpott argues that a better measure would be to examine the group of people who “want to work” even though they are currently inactive.
44. In terms of gender it is interesting to examine this further since it is often assumed that women are more likely to be voluntarily inactive due to caring responsibilities (Radio 4, 2013). The UK Labour

Market Statistics (ONS, 2014) allow us to examine the reasons behind inactivity and therefore identify the proportion of those who want to work (table.1)

Table 1. Levels of inactivity ('000s)

Category	All people	Male	Female
Number of inactive people	8,932	3,288	5,644
Number who want a job	2,288	942	1,346
% who want a job	25.6%	28.6%	23.8%

(Adapted from ONS, 2014)

45. Although the proportion of women wanting to work is lower, there are more women in that position. This is due to the higher numbers of women classified as inactive. The above covers all women of working age but there is little compelling evidence that the situation should be different for women in the 16-24 bracket. The 'want to work' model outlined by Philpot (2011) tends to ignore the underlying labour market structures that may prevent some groups of young people seeking employment. For example, current projections from the Labour Force Survey suggest there are almost 170,000 young women who are not actively seeking work due to the need to care for children or other family members (UK Data Service, 2014). It is often assumed that these young women are included in the group who don't want to work in Philpot's model. However, it is likely a significant proportion of these would want to work if they felt there were jobs available that allowed them to meet their family commitments- it is these structural issues that must be questioned, not the motivation for young people to work.
46. Furthermore the NEETs category is inclusive of a broad range of young people transitioning from compulsory education to the labour market via various routes (such as apprenticeships, further education or direct entry to the job market). There is scant literature exploring how some of those routes lead to successful outcomes whilst others do not or how to facilitate the choice of successful routes. Additionally, an analysis that takes account of the people who have multiple periods NEET may also identify the impact of low level, precarious employment on the future prospects of young people and the likelihood they will continue to churn in and out of low paid work and unemployment (Simmons, 2014; Shildrick et al, 2010).
47. The next section looks at how others have tried to identify who falls into the NEET category.

Who is NEET?

48. Developing effective policies to reduce the number of young people NEET requires an understanding of who is in this group, any shared characteristics they may have and where they are located. From there we can begin to identify both what is linked with people becoming NEET and the impact being NEET has on their lives. This is particularly important from the perspective of gender: despite some commonalities, young men and women may become NEET for different reasons and experience the consequences in different ways and to varying degrees.
49. This section looks at how others have tried to break down and analyse this group to see in more detail who these young people are.

Numbers

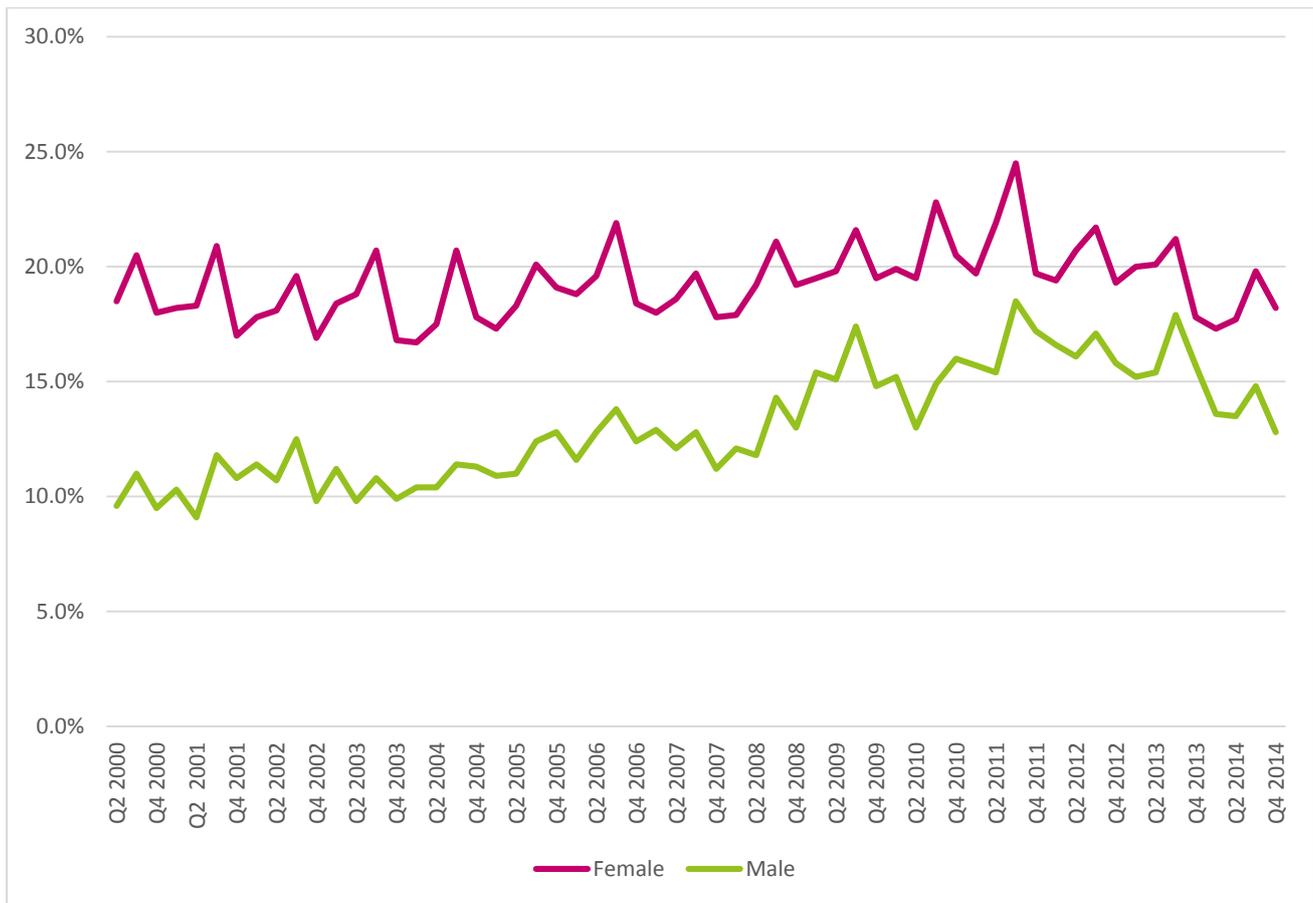
50. Overall there are 738,000 young people (16-24) NEET. Data from the Department for Education (DfE, 2014) shows that the overall NEET level has been persistently high for more than decade. Even

as far back as the middle of the year 2000, 11% of 18-24 year olds were NEET. This discounts the recession as the primary cause and points to an underlying structural cause behind the NEET levels. It is estimated that the rise in the levels of youth unemployment began in 2004 (Petronglo and Van Reenen,2011;), before the recession took hold.

Women

51. However, these figures also show some interesting gender splits in both the current and historical trends.

Chart 1: NEET levels April 2000- December 2014 by gender

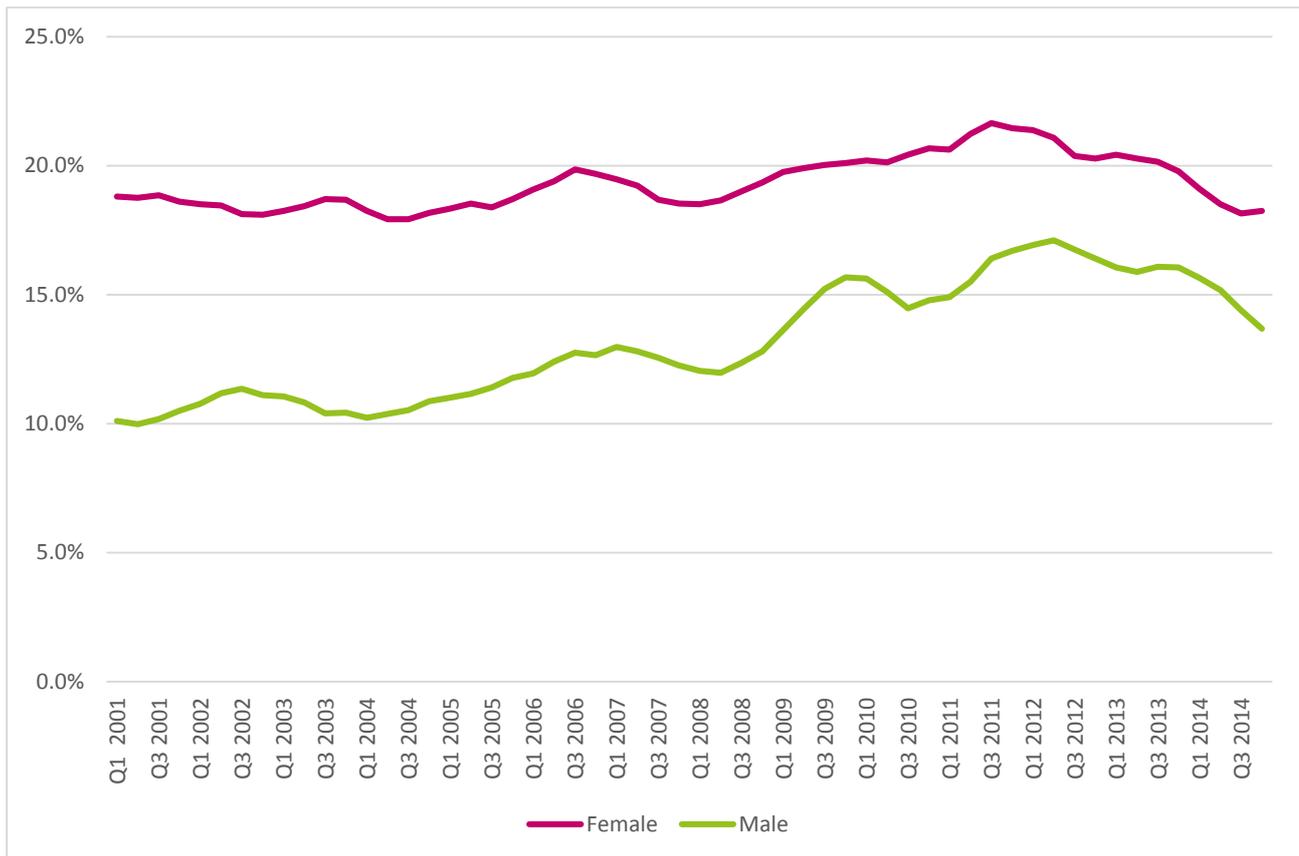


52. Chart 1 highlights the seasonal nature of the NEET levels. Peaks in the NEET figures coincide with the July-September months when many colleges are closed and children are on school summer holidays. Although the peaks are roughly consistent for both men and women the effect is more pronounced for women which may suggest a link to the greater likelihood for young women to have caring responsibilities that prevent them from working during long school holidays
53. By applying a four period moving average to this chart we can eliminate the seasonal effect and identify more clearly the trends in both male and female NEET levels. Chart 2 shows that whilst female levels of NEET have remained consistently high, male levels of NEET whilst starting on a still considerable 10% began to rise appreciably during the latter part of 2004. This is consistent with Petronglo and Van Reenen's (2011) assertion touched on earlier.
54. It has been suggested that much of the overall NEET level is due to underlying structural issues in the economy (ACEVO 2012), however this seems to be truer of the female rate than the male rate.

Whereas the male rate shows a rise from 2004, corresponding with the beginning of a rise in youth unemployment the female level shows a much smaller rise over this period. This opens up the hypothesis that whilst the male rate is more sensitive to changing economic conditions, the female rate is more entrenched.

- 55. This not only suggests that we might expect the male rate to fall more quickly as the effects of any recovery are felt, but also that we will require gender specific approaches if we are to reduce the number of young women NEET.

56. **Chart 2. NEET levels 2001-2014 by gender (4 period moving average)**



- 57. Knowledge of this structural difference between the male and female NEET rate also allows us to identify the long run trends. The latest NEET figures (October-December 2014) show that there are 428,000 young women NEET compared to 315,000 young men. The extra 118,000 young women NEET is representative of trends over the last decade or so. When taken for the whole of the period covered by these charts, there were an average of more than 435,000 young women NEET and almost 295,000 young men- a long run average difference of 130,000. There have been some signs more recently that the figures are returning to this trend- male NEET figures have continued to drop in the last 12 months (from 375,000 to 310,000), whilst female rates showed a slight increase (424,000 to 428,000).

Socio Economic status

- 58. Thompson (2011) suggests that young people from the DE socio-economic group are “significantly more likely to be NEET than those from professional backgrounds... [and] are also more likely to lack academic qualifications, and be in Government- supported training schemes.” Thompson’s analysis shows that more than three quarters of NEETS come from the lowest socio-economic groups (DE).By applying the proportions from Thompson’s analysis to current data we can estimate the total number

of NEETs in each socio-economic group (Table 2). This highlights that there are more than 545,000 young people from the DE groups who are NEET compared with just over 46,000 from the AB groups.

Table 2: Application of Thompson (2011) proportions to current data

Socio-Economic group	Proportion of overall NEETS	Total	Male	Female
TOTAL	100%	738,000	310,000	428,000
A	2.30%	16,974	7,130	9,844
B	4.10%	30,258	12,710	17,548
C1	11.20%	82,656	34,720	47,936
C2	7.60%	56,088	14,260	32,528
D	50.40%	371,952	156,240	215,712
E	24.40%	180,072	75,640	104,432

59. Blanden, Gregg and Macmillan (2013) advise caution in interpreting analyses of social class as the methods used can disguise the realities of a person's situation. Of particular concern is the fact that, for young people, the socio-economic status of their father is used as a proxy for their own status. This is problematic in that it ignores not only their own resources but the influence of the mother in determining outcomes for their children.
60. Therefore it is useful to look at other socio-economic indicators to understand more fully how this status is represented the NEET numbers. A critical and often used factor is proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) as these children often live in the poorest families. Latest Department for Education figures show that 15% of pupils are eligible for Free School Meals.
61. The proportion of people who were eligible for FSM who become NEET is 34% (Mirza-Davies, 2014) confirming that there is an over representation of people from poorer backgrounds amongst the total NEET population.

Ethnicity

Table 3: Proportion of NEETS by Ethnicity and Gender- data from census 2011

Ethnicity	All	Male	Female
White	14.19%	13.59%	14.80%
Mixed	17.35%	17.54%	17.16%
Asian	12.18%	9.86%	14.69%
Black	15.20%	15.90%	14.53%
Other	14.09%	11.62%	17.26%
Total	14.85%	13.39%	14.88%

62. Analysis of the literature does not provide a complete or consistent understanding of the role ethnicity plays in making an individual more or less likely to become and remain NEET. Data from the 2011 census shows that mixed race or black young people are most likely to be NEET (17.4% and 15.2% respectively) against an average of 14.9%. There are also variations between ethnic groups based on gender. Black young women have a NEET rate below average, whilst black young men are more significantly more likely to be NEET than men from other ethnic groups. Conversely whilst just 9.9% of Asian men were NEET, 14.7% of young Asian women were. Similarly 11.6% of men and 17.3% of women in 'other' category were NEET. However a study for the National Audit Office (2008) found that 'White British' people were 1.2 times more likely to be NEET than people of other ethnicity. This variance may be explained by the limitations of statistical reviews which often rely on broad categories of ethnic groups that may mask underlying variation and explain the discrepancies in these figures. The impact of ethnicity on a young person's chances of becoming NEET therefore remains far from certain and requires further analysis.

Geography

63. Geography has strong overlaps with socio economic status, job availability, educational provision and ethnicity. In any overview of who NEETs are, it is therefore important to analyse where NEETs are located.
64. Most of the cities with high proportions of people NEET are in the North of England, in a belt running from Liverpool to Hull (Lee and Wright, 2011). Conversely the areas with the lowest levels of NEET are overwhelmingly in the South of England with Bath, Kingston-Upon-Thames, Bournemouth, Wokingham and Oxfordshire all having less than 10% of young people who are NEET. An exception to this is the city of York which has similarly low levels but is surrounded by areas with higher levels of NEETs. The following tables focus on areas with high levels of young women NEET, although the trends are broadly similar for young men.

Table 4: Local authorities with a high proportion of female NEET levels

Local authority	% Female NEET
Hartlepool	25.5%
Walsall	24.8%
North East Lincolnshire	24.7%
Wolverhampton	23.9%
Barking and Dagenham	23.6%
Redcar and Cleveland	23.3%
Sandwell	22.9%
Doncaster	22.7%
Oldham	22.5%
Middlesbrough	22.3%
Blackpool	22.2%

65. If we consider numbers instead of proportions, the geographical spread is wider (Table. 5). This may be useful in terms of identifying policy solutions: concentrating on areas where there are large numbers of NEETs (even where they represent a lower portion of the population) will help to better direct resources to where they are needed the most.

Table 5: Local authority by number of Female NEETs

Local authority	Number of Female NEETs
Birmingham	14,708
Kent	12,414
Essex	10,094
Lancashire	9,873
Hampshire	8,064
Leeds	7,170
Hertfordshire	7,082
Norfolk	6,999
Bradford	6,933
Nottinghamshire	6,358

66. Figure 1 shows a stronger concentration in the North West. Grimsby, Doncaster, Warrington and Wigan show particularly high levels in this analysis. There are further pockets in the North East, consistent with analysis by Carter (2012) who demonstrates the existence of youth unemployment hotspots which correspond to these areas. Additionally we see a cluster of authorities around Birmingham forming part of the West Midlands conurbation and the Black Country towns. This clustering effect is interesting and will be useful in helping to identify the efficacy of existing policy interventions and the potential to transform these areas' experience of NEETs.

Typologies

67. Almost all existing research guards against treating all NEETs as a single, homogenous category. People will become NEET for different reasons, influenced by their backgrounds, current circumstances and future plans and ambitions. There have been several attempts to identify different characteristics of NEET young people which seek to reflect their experiences of becoming, remaining or ceasing to be NEET.
68. These typologies seek to categorise NEETs in four broad ways: by personal circumstances, by time, by learning status and by expected trajectory. Table 6 shows how some authors have attempted to model various typologies and assess the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches. Collectively, the typologies help to identify certain common characteristics. We have attempted to assess the strengths and weaknesses of these models.

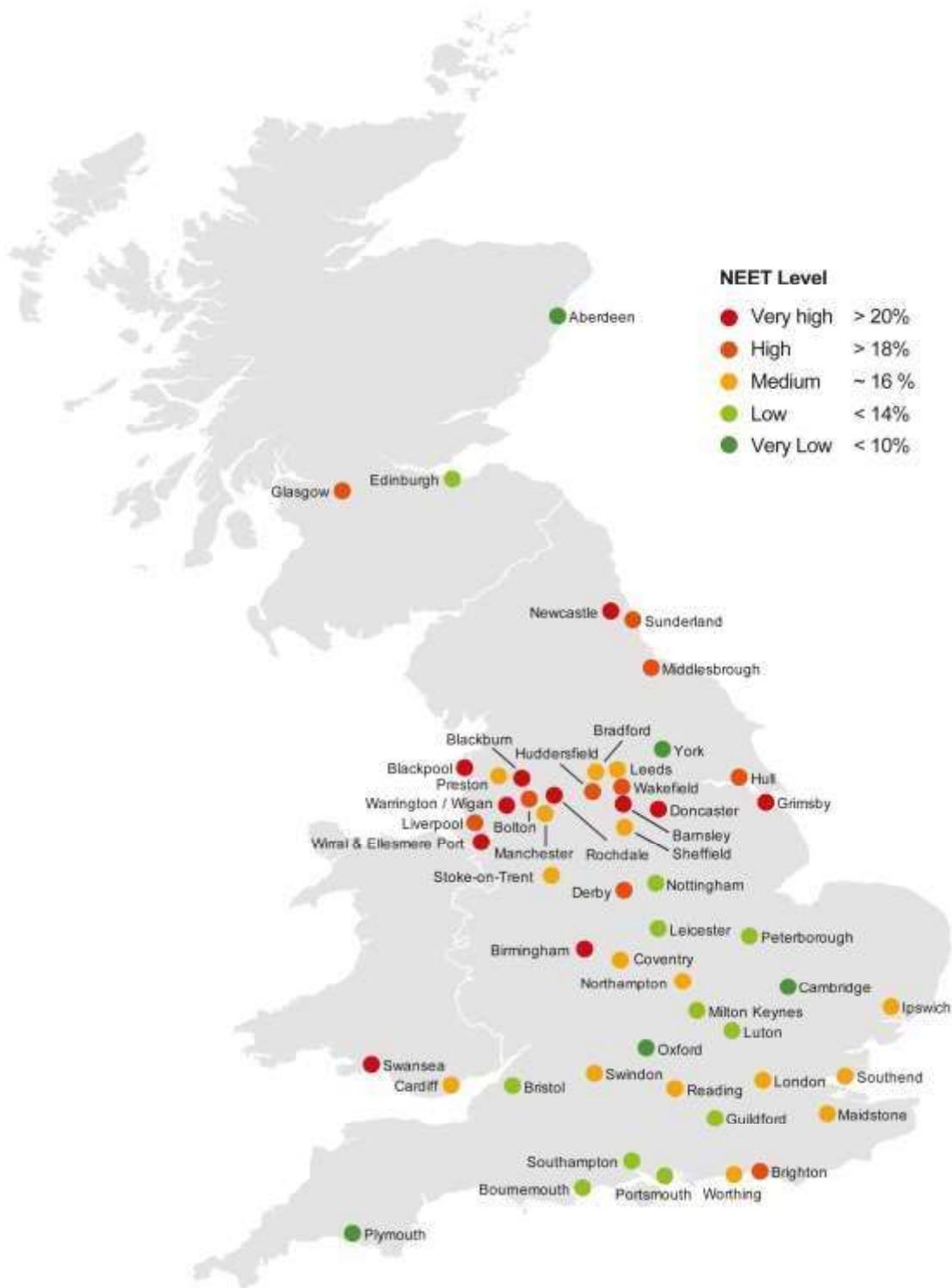


Figure 1: Towns and cities with high levels of NEET

Source: The Work Foundation analysis using Labour Force Survey 2009/10 (cited in Lee and Wright 2011)

Table 6: Typologies of NEETs

Table 6: Typologies of NEETs

Approach/ Author	Sub group	Characteristics	Strengths	Limitations
Personal/ Spielhofer et al	Open to learning	Positive School Experience, 5 A*-C	Recognises influence of personal circumstances	Emphasis on attainment, restricted to 16-17 year olds
	Undecided and NEET	Lower qualifications, No significant personal barriers, Lack support		
	Sustained NEET	Negative school experience, No qualifications Multiple personal barriers		
Personal/ BIS	Multiple barriers, not ready to progress	In need of extensive support	Helps to identify those further away from job market.	Tends to overlook skills Does not consider demand for labour
	Multiple barriers, ready to progress	Have overcome barriers, ready to progress		
	Able but lacking direction	Positive and able, but unable to formulate plans		
	Able, positive has plans	Positive, able with clear direction		
	Qualified, unable to find a job	Qualifications and experience		
Temporal/ Allen, Metha and Rutt	Core NEET	Low levels of skills and qualifications	Useful in assessing balance of preventive and reintegration strategies	
	Floating NEET	Lack direction and motivation, churn in and out of EET		
	Cyclical NEET	Sufficiently qualified. Financial distress		
	In Transition	NEET by choice, less likely to be in financial distress		
	At risk	Likely to feel long-term impact		
Learning Status/BIS	Recent experience	Younger age profile	Highlights decreases in educational opportunities and engagement in older age groups	Prioritises development of current opportunities
	Applied for a course	Women are over-represented		
	Looking for opportunities	Slightly older, actively searching		
	Want to learn	Older still, no current plans but open to future		
	No Plans	Poor previous experiences		
Trajectory/ Dorsett and Lucchino	Accumulating Human Capital	In full time education- either throughout entire period or with a gap year	Begins to identify characteristics/ reasons people enter negative trajectory	Focus wider than NEETS Ignores learning that happens at later stages
	Successful education to work transition	Quick and successful route from education into (secure) employment		
	Possible cause for concern	NEET from either 16 or 18, long term worklessness or total withdrawal from the labour market		

Causes, indicators and barriers to reengagement
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69. Due to the multiple influences on young people's lives it is difficult to form an accurate picture about what causes a young person to become NEET, but there is a large degree of consensus about which shared characteristics are predictors for how likely a young person is to be NEET.
70. The Audit Commission developed a model analysing how specific characteristics increase the likelihood of someone being NEET, as shown in full in Table 7. The biggest factor (perhaps self-evidently) was shown to be those having recent experience of being NEET. This supports the idea that many people will oscillate between low paid work and unemployment so will spend multiple periods NEET.

Table 7: Causes of NEET status

Explanatory factor	Direction of relationship	Increase in likelihood of being NEET for six months or more
Recent NEET experience	Positive	7.877 times more likely
Pregnant parent	Positive	2.816 times more likely
Supervised by Youth Offending Team	Positive	2.575 times more likely
Limited recent education	Positive	2.281 times more likely
Substance misuse	Positive	2.084 times more likely
Carer	Positive	2.024 times more likely
Special Educational Needs	Positive	1.483 times more likely
Limiting Learning Difficulty	Positive	1.319 times more likely
White British	Positive	1.221 times more likely

Taken from Audit Commission (2010)

72. Similarly, BIS (2013) lists a lack of job or training opportunities; poor experiences of education; low qualifications; poor literacy and numeracy; challenging family circumstances and low levels of confidence as factors that contribute to a person becoming NEET. ACEVO (2012) add to this list with experiences of being in care; disability; and socio-economic status whilst Allen, Metha and Rutt (2012) also contribute parental employment; poor school attendance; criminal behaviour and substance misuse.
73. Building on the trajectories analysis of Dorsett and Lucchino (2012) it is possible to develop further insight into things that appear to influence why people become NEET. Table 8, draws on Dorsett and Lucchino's population estimates to estimate the number of people who possess various characteristics who become NEET. This shows that several factors appear linked to an increased likelihood of entering a negative trajectory (of being either NEET, unemployed long term or making a continued and extended withdrawal from the labour market as they get older). Notably young women are more than twice as likely as young men to be in

a 'cause for concern' trajectory whilst personal and parental qualifications are also significant factors.

Table 8: Proportions of group in 'cause for concern' trajectory

Group	Total number in group	Number in 'cause for concern' trajectory	Proportion of group in cause for concern trajectory
Female	388,000	55,900	14.4%
Male	372,000	24,100	6.5%
Parental qualification low	174,000	47,700	27.4%
Parental qualification high	129,000	2,600	2.0%
GCSE D-G/ No qualification	152,000	46,300	30.5%
GCSE A-C	608,000	33,700	5.5%

Compiled from data in Dorsett and Lucchino (2012)

74. The literature relating to underlying causes can be grouped into four main categories: labour market structure; family and personal circumstances and social exclusion; educational attainment; and perhaps most importantly gender.

Labour market structure

75. Many of the barriers young people face will relate to their personal circumstances (albeit a broad range). However young people themselves are more likely to identify a shortage of jobs as a greater barrier to entering the labour market than their own lack of skills or qualifications (Simmons et al, 2014).
76. Although NEET levels are currently elevated, in part due to the ongoing effects of the financial crisis, a large part of inactivity and unemployment in young people is thought to be due to long running structural elements of the UK labour market. Wolf (2011) identifies five key changes in the labour market which is increasing the importance of these structural aspects:

The youth labour market is disappearing:

77. Until relatively recently most young people transitioned into employment in their mid-teens following completion of secondary education. Current trends are for people to remain in education for longer. This is due in part to the educational premiums that are gained in later work opportunities but also due to a lack of jobs, which pushes young people into education, rather than facing a hostile labour market (ibid).

High returns to education and qualifications:

78. The premium that is obtained from completing university degrees is significant in shaping the current experience of young people- those educated to degree level will see their likelihood of being NEET greatly reduced (ACEVO 2012). Conversely lower levels of vocational qualifications can have a neutral or even negative impact on future earnings (Dearden, McGranahan and Sianesi, 2004). This impact widens the gap between those who gain higher qualifications and those who do not, creating a group of people who are increasingly excluded

from the labour market. As this trend continues, employers are increasingly likely to see those leaving education at a younger age as 'second best'- 14% of employers would not employ school-leavers, whilst just 5% said the same about graduates in their first job (CIPD, 2013); young people with low level qualifications are entering into a job market where there are increasingly limited opportunities.

Universal aspiration to higher education:

79. The increased wage premiums gained from higher education has created a strong desire amongst young people and their parents for them to enter higher education. The vast majority of parents want their children to attend university (Wolf 2011) however just 26% of 18 year olds entered university in 2012 (BIS, 2013).
80. This emphasises the gap between those with higher education compared to those with lower qualifications. Additionally, as rates of university attendance rises, the premiums gained by that education are likely to fall which in turn is creating a highly competitive but ultimately frustrating graduate job market.

High returns to employment experience:

81. Employers are increasingly reluctant to employ young people, citing a lack of skills and a lack of work experience (Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, 2013). This has created a 'Catch-22' for many young people, who find it difficult to gain initial experience that will help them to progress into longer term positions.

Rapid economic change:

82. The changes in the economy were expected to see low skill, routine jobs decline with a corresponding increase in higher level jobs requiring higher level qualifications. This has not been the case- instead there has been a contraction in mid-level jobs and increases at the top and bottom of the job market.
83. This in turn has created a highly competitive job market where the skills and experience of older workers gives them an advantage whilst also creating a bottleneck which limits the opportunities for young people to progress to higher levels unless they have previously gained essential higher level qualifications.
84. Furthermore continuous full-time employment is becoming less frequent. Instead, flexible forms of employment such as part-time work, fixed-term contracts, and self-employment are gaining importance. This makes education to work transitions inherently less stable and is likely to not only delay entry to the labour market but increase the likelihood of repeated experiences of being NEET during the years following an end to compulsory schooling (Plantenga et al, 2013).

Careers advice

85. The Women in Work Commission report (2006) called for careers advice that challenged gender stereotypes. There is a broad consensus that the current state of careers advice for young people falls far short of what is needed. In evidence to the Education Committee follow up Inquiry into careers guidance, the Secretary of State for Education acknowledged that 'there had never been a golden age of careers advice and guidance.' (Education Committee, 2015).
86. Several organisations have sought to establish what good careers advice 'looks like'. For example, the Gatsby Foundation has produced research setting out 8 benchmarks which it

sees as the common thread for good quality advice and guidance. These can be summarised as:

- Having a stable careers programme
- Learning from career and labour market information
- Addressing the needs of each pupil
- Linking the curriculum to careers
- Providing opportunity for encounters with employers
- Providing workplace experience
- Providing encounters with further and higher education providers
- Personal guidance

87. Since 2012, schools have had a duty to provide independent and impartial careers guidance. This was designed to make the delivery of guidance more responsive to the needs of pupils and to encourage schools to liaise with local employers. There is currently significant criticism of this approach from a range of sources. For example, in January 2013 MPs on the Education Committee expressed concern about the ability of schools to meet the requirements the duty places on them and noted that funding for both schools and the National Careers Service was lacking.
88. The Gatsby Foundation (2014) argues that, despite some good work in this area, schools are currently falling short in their provision: just 2% of schools were able to demonstrate they had met the requirements of five of the above benchmarks for all pupils, with no school achieving above that level. Under more relaxed measures of achieving the benchmarks, for more than half of pupils this rate improved. The report argued that despite this evidence that there is some good provision, it is not well established or consistent enough to benefit all young people.
89. Ofsted's (2012) most recent review of careers guidance in schools showed that the new system was not working well enough. Ofsted found that just 20% of schools were able to secure sufficient information for pupils to consider a wide breadth of career options. The review pointed to the lack of training given to teachers to provide independent advice, resulting in staff often providing advice with too narrow a focus, for example on academic routes. It also criticised the lack of clarity in the guidance developed by the Department for Education, an argument also advanced by The National Council for Educational Research (NFER) and Local Government Association in a report published in 2015 (NFER 2015).
90. These views have been supported by employer organisations with both the CBI and British Chamber of Commerce calling for more investment in careers guidance. The CBI published evidence which showed that 9 in 10 young people felt they had not received the information they needed to make decisions about their careers, a figure it said showed careers advice and guidance 'was on life support.'
91. During 2014 and early 2015 much debate centred on the funding available to schools to deliver careers advice and guidance. The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission had noted in its 2013 report that the decision to devolve responsibility for careers advice to schools had not been accompanied by a devolution of funding which meant schools were inadequately resourced to provide quality careers advice and guidance. This was a view shared by Careers England which in [insert date] called for the Department for Education to provide 'capacity building' grants to support schools in this area. An alternative pressed by Ofsted and the Education Select Committee in their reports suggested a greater role for the National Careers Service in brokering services and building capacity within schools.

92. Increasingly, policy arguments on careers advice are shifting towards providing careers advice to pupils near the start of Secondary education. For example, the Education Select Committee report welcomed the extension of the duty on schools to provide independent advice to cover year 8 pupils. Amongst others there is consensus on the need to prepare young people for making choice about their future careers at a young age (e.g. Gatsby 2014, Education Committee 2013,).
93. On the other hand, there are arguments that careers advice should be aimed at all ages, and concern has been expressed that at the moment this is not working as effectively as it should. For example, Ofsted (2012) found that there was little awareness of the National Careers Service (NCS) and agreed with the Education Committee that NCS required better promotion if it were to achieve its aim as a genuine all-age careers service. This was supported by a report for the London Assembly (London Assembly Economy Committee, 2013) which emphasised the need for long-term career planning and ongoing support. This call is reflected in NIACE's (2015) continued support for ongoing career reviews and the promotion of skills development into adult life.
94. Additionally, careers advice is often lacking in consistency and narrowly focussed on promoting higher education over vocational routes (Ofsted 2013, Education Committee 2013). This has the effect of further entrenching the idea that vocational routes are second best whilst also denying young people the quality of support they need to make key decisions about their future.

Vocational training and apprenticeships

95. In the past 5 years there has been particular focus on increasing the number of apprenticeships as a potential solution to high levels of youth unemployment and worklessness with several political parties committed to increasing the number of apprentices. Within this context, there has been some debate about how to define apprenticeships and their usefulness in their current form for tackling worklessness for younger people, particularly young women.
96. For example, in 2012, The Richard Review (2012) recommended that apprenticeships be re-focussed on higher educational levels, Level 3 or above. This would make apprenticeships equivalent to A-Level or higher and the Review argued that this would ensure young people completing apprenticeships have the requisite skills and experience to move into secure employment.
97. In the run up to the 2015 General Election, the Labour party seemed to endorse this recommendation in their commitment to guarantee apprenticeship places for school leavers who 'get the grades', assumed to mean the apprenticeships will be available only at Level 3 or above. The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) has also indicated a preference for apprenticeships at Level 3 and above, but goes further to recommend that they be available to under 23s only. The Richard Review did not however advocate the removal of vocational routes for those without higher qualifications. Instead, it called for a system of 'modern traineeships' or 'foundation apprenticeships' which would help to develop young people prior to engaging with a full apprenticeship.
98. The current coalition Government appears to have opted for a hybrid system of introducing traineeships as a preparation for work including full apprenticeships but without limiting the latter to higher level qualifications alone.
99. A Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (CESI) report, confirmed by the Richards review, demonstrated that the rise in apprenticeship numbers has been due to an increase in existing

workers over 25 enrolling on apprenticeship schemes which are often designed to upskill and accredit their original role. There is some dispute over this point as the accreditation and development of the adult workforce is widely supported; there is a clear need to invest in ongoing development of the adult workforce (NIACE,2015). However the Public Accounts Committee (2012) reported that much of this training would have taken place outside the apprenticeship scheme. This effect was more marked amongst older apprentices- BIS research (2014) estimated that 44% of training for apprentices over 25 would have happened without Government funding (the deadweight loss was 20.5% for 18-24 year olds). This suggest that funds would have been better targeted at new recruits and younger, unskilled workers.

100. For this reason and because there is a reluctance amongst young people to undertake apprenticeships it has been advocated that a greater emphasis should be placed on promoting apprenticeships by providing the option for 14-16 year olds to enrol on apprentices schemes alongside study. (Demos, Wolf).
101. This area of policy does have a strong gender focus. Latest figures for apprenticeships show that despite this, young women continue to work in a narrow range of fields- 61% of female apprentices work in just five sectors, whilst the same proportion of men a spread across more than 10 sectors.
102. This is particularly concerning given the fact that many of the sectors with high concentrations of young women have low pay, fewer available jobs and poorer opportunities for progression. For example, whilst there are 5 jobs for every qualified construction worker, each qualified practitioner in hair and beauty is competing with 4 other young people.
103. There is current literature that discusses the need for candidate's choice of apprenticeships to be based on good careers advice. CESI have shown that there is a mismatch between jobs available in the labour market and choice of apprenticeships. This seems particularly true for jobs that employ a higher proportion of women. The report showed that there were two jobs for every newly qualified construction worker whilst a newly qualified hairdresser is competing with four other hairdressers for each available job. This would appear to be exacerbated by the increasing numbers of young men who are taking traditionally female courses and apprenticeships whilst young women are not taking up traditionally male courses in similar numbers (EHRC, 2014). This reflects the latest Government statistics on apprentices (BIS, 2015) which show that almost two thirds of female apprentices work in just 5 sectors (a similar proportion of men are spread across 10 sectors).
104. Demos also believe that better data collection and sharing to monitor the characteristics of those taking apprenticeships as well as their destinations upon completing apprenticeships will help to focus policy on broadening the appeal of vocational routes. Similarly, they advocate clearer guidance and stricter quality control to support the aim of achieving parity of esteem between academic and vocational routes called for by Alison Wolf.
105. Apprenticeship pay has also been controversial. The Low Pay Commission has the remit to recommend increases to minimum rates of pay whilst balancing the potential impact on levels of employment. In March 2015 it decided to recommend modest increases in the apprenticeship rate of pay due to concerns that larger increases would deter employers from taking on apprentices. This is in line with the Richards review recommendation which suggests that lower rates of pay for apprenticeships can allow employers to cover the costs of their training and development.

106. Because of the challenges facing apprentices, particularly those living independently, of surviving on very low income there have been some calls for higher apprenticeship wages. The Liberal Democrats called in October 2014 for a £1 increase in the apprenticeship rate of the National Minimum Wage. In March 2015 the Government has agreed with the need to increase the apprenticeship rate which will now rise by 20% (57p) in October 2015.

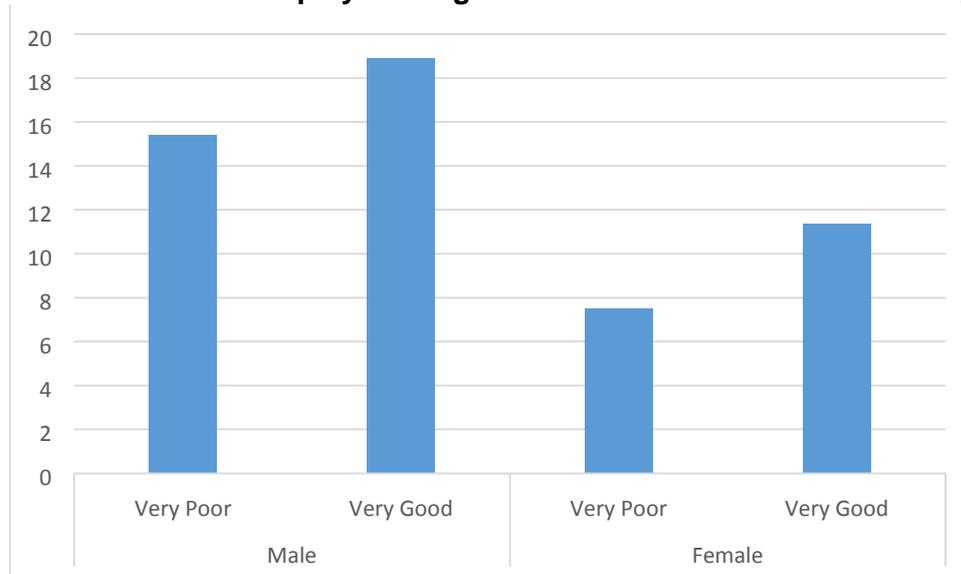
Family circumstances and social exclusion

107. It seems that whatever measure of socio-economic status is used, those at the lower end of the scale are much more likely to experience negative outcomes. Mirza-Davies 2014 highlights that whilst people eligible for free school meals make up just 15% of the pupil cohort, that group goes on to form 30% of the NEET population.
108. Furthermore we have already seen that young people whose parents had poor qualifications were 13 times more likely to be on a poor career trajectory than those whose parents had high level qualifications (Dorsett and Lucchino, 2012). From that same study we also see that 1 in 3 people whose parents lived in social rented housing were on a poor trajectory compared to just 1 in 15 people whose parents owned their own home
109. Burchardt et al. (2002) define many of the factors which are dimensions of social exclusion. These relate to Consumption activity (relative/absolute poverty); Savings activity (savings, home ownership); Production activity (paid work, education, looking after a family); Political activity; and Social activity (friends, family and community). Salvesberg and Martin-Giles (2008) suggest that experiencing exclusion in one of these areas will make it more likely that further exclusion will follow. They argue that this results in people prioritising immediate needs such as food and shelter, often at the expense of long term prospects and security.
110. This provides a possible explanation for the numbers of young people experiencing multiple periods NEET interspersed with periods of precarious employment. As Yates and Payne (2010) discuss, one crucial, immediate need is housing, stressing the importance of secure housing tenure in preventing people becoming or remaining NEET

Educational attainment

111. Those with low level qualifications are much more likely to become NEET than those with higher level qualifications. As we have seen above, much of this is due to changing labour market structures and the increasing importance of formal qualifications.
112. Simmons and Thompson (2012) demonstrate that the societal preference for traditional academic routes over vocational routes can, in particular, encourage some young people to pursue less valued academic qualifications which do little to enhance their ability to enter the job market upon completion therefore further excluding disadvantaged young people.
113. The impact of a failure to obtain basic skills can be seen by Birdwell, Grist and Margo's (2011) analysis of the number of years of employment that is achieved by men and women at the age of 37 with varying levels of literacy (Chart 3). This supports the data that those with few or no qualifications are more likely to be NEET than those gaining at least 5 GCSEs at A*-C (Dorsett and Lucchino, 2012).
114. Significantly, women with good levels of literacy are able to achieve fewer years of employment than men with poor levels of literacy suggesting that there may be other factors that impact on a women's ability to find and maintain employment.

Chart 3: Years of employment aged 37 with different levels of literacy



115. Low educational attainment is associated with a number of factors, including socio-economic status and parental qualifications (Evans et al, 2009). However, disengagement from education at an early age has a significant impact (ibid.). A study of young people aged 13-20 who were accessing Barnardos' education, training and support services showed that many had poor experiences of school and disengaged at a very young age. The report showed that disengagement by young people reduced educational attainment, locking them out of further opportunities for continuing education or employment and thus prioritised preventing disengagement as a key aspect of reducing future levels of youth unemployment.
116. This only takes us so far however. The same study highlights that some of the key reasons people had bad experiences of school were due to relationships with teachers and bullying from peers. Importantly it also highlights the potential impacts on the mental health and emotional wellbeing of young people which have a lasting effect on their experiences of later education and the labour market.
117. However, superficial reading of educational attainment cannot explain fully the reasons people become NEET. This is most evident in the fact that whilst more young women are holding higher level qualifications (Brinkley, Jones and Lee), a greater proportion of young women become NEET. This may be due in part to the young men being more likely to take subjects (both academically and vocationally) that lead to higher paid jobs with greater opportunities for progression. However, there are likely to be other gender specific causes of being NEET which warrant further investigation.

Gender

118. We have seen that even though young women often hold higher qualifications, they still make up a higher proportion of NEETS and those on 'cause for concern' career trajectories (Plantenga 2013, Dorsett and Lucchino 2012). It is likely that some of this impact is due to the subjects that young women take and are encouraged to take as well as the careers guidance they receive which often reinforces gender segregation (Ofsted 2013).
119. However, Allen, Metha and Rutt (2012) show that the barriers to engagement with the labour market are different for young men and young women. Men stated that lack of experience was the main reason for them not being able to engage whilst women stated that the need for

flexible working was their main barrier.

120. This suggests that young women are more likely to have caring responsibilities that require them to need flexible working. This is borne out by the Labour Force Survey statistics which suggest 170,000 young women are economically inactive because they are caring for children or other family members. However we should exercise a note of caution here- the need to care for family members does not explicitly demonstrate a lack of availability or motivation to seek employment.
121. Furthermore although flexibility was the most cited barrier amongst young women, this still account for only 1 in 5 of the women involved in the study, suggesting other barriers affected a greater number of people.
122. It is important not to equate the challenge of caring responsibilities solely with childcare as many young women also care, formally and informally, for other family members. However, Hutchinson et al (2014) have suggested that (a lack of) childcare is the single most important factor in determining a women's economic activity. She showed that this was also related to levels of qualifications with more than half of those with A-levels (53%) stating they had reliable childcare whilst just a third of those without qualifications could say the same.
123. The Women and Work Commission (2006) also identified that women returning to work following childbirth often found it more difficult, often having to change sector or employer, creating an additional barrier for young mothers. This is exacerbated by continued discrimination in employment and recruitment with a third of managers saying they would prefer to employ a man in his 20s or 30s to avoid issues around maternity leave (Slater & Gordon, 2014), whilst 70% of mothers felt they had been put on a different career track when returning to work (ibid).
124. However, these studies offer only a partial explanation for elevated female NEET levels. Whilst 70-80% of young mothers are NEET (Hutchinson et al, 2014) they actually represent as little as a 20% of the NEET population (Lanning 2012). Similarly in a study carried out by Russell, Thompson and Simmons (2014) just 30% of young women gave pregnancy or childcare as a reason for their NEET status. Lanning (2012) has also suggested that some young women will choose motherhood due to a lack of labour market opportunities.

Impact

Economic

125. The high level of young people NEET has a huge impact on both the personal financial situation of young people as well as on the wider economy. The cost to the economy in terms of both benefit payments and lowered tax receipts is estimated to be around £4.8 billion (Macmillan, 2012).
126. Table 10 shows how this is broken down. It is based on the assumption that there are 750,000 claimants receiving an average of £5,600 and that claimants would be working in jobs that pay less (and therefore owe less tax) than other people their age. These assumptions mean that the true cost to the exchequer is likely to be underestimated.
127. Additionally, falls in productivity mean that youth unemployment is likely to have cost the economy £10.7 billion in 2012 alone. There are future costs with the current level of youth unemployment expected to cost the country £28 billion over the next decade (ACEVO, 2012).

Table 10: Estimated cost to the exchequer of youth unemployment in 2012.

Total costs	16-17	18-24
Total benefits paid	£3,558.90	£5,661.51
Total number of claimants	27,500	723,380
Total cost of benefits	£97,869,750	£4,095,423,104
Total tax revenue lost	£0.00	£1,199.20
Total paid out in WTC	-£142.70	-£616.98
Total number of NEETs	144,197	1,114,322
Total cost of loss of tax	-£20,769,911	£648,780,942
Total cost	£77,099,839	£4,744,204,046

Taken from Macmillan (2012)

Financial

128. In addition to the overall economic impact, young people also feel a personal financial effect as a result of periods spend NEET. They suffer a degree of 'wage scarring' in terms of lost income both now and in the future as well as a loss of confidence and disengagement from the labour market (Lee and Wight, 2011).

Table 11: Future costs in terms of earnings

	Male	Female
Average no. of months out of work if youth unemployment	23.56	36.31
% lower earnings at 30/34 per month of youth unemployment	0.67	0.47
Total % lower earnings at 30/34 for average youth unemployed	15.77%	17.07%
Average gross weekly earnings at 30/34	£432.18	£254.68
Average weekly earnings lost from youth unemployment	£68.22	£43.46
Average number of weeks worked	48.92	40.94
Annual cost of earnings lost	£3,337.08	£1,779.37

Taken from Macmillan (2012)

129. Table 11 shows that both men and women who spend time out of work between the ages of 16 and 24 will see a reduction in their earning potential at the age of 34. Young women who experience time NEET will lose a greater proportion of potential income compared to other women, mainly due to the fact that they are more likely to be out of work and spend longer unemployed than their male peers.

130. Whilst it appears that the overall wage penalty is higher for men than for women (£3400 compared to £1800) this is due almost entirely to the fact that women earn less on average and are more likely to work part time (ACEVO, 2012). Furthermore the experience of one spell of unemployment itself increases the probability of further spells (Bell and Blanchflower, 2011)
131. It is clear from this analysis that young women spend longer periods of time out of work than young men and as a result experience a greater impact on their future earning power and likelihood of repeated spells of unemployment later.

Social Mobility

132. We have already seen how having a particular socio-economic status can increase a person's chances of becoming NEET (Dorsett and Lucchino, 2012; ACEVO, 2012; Thompson, 2011) however it is equally true that periods spent NEET restrict the social mobility of young people with early disadvantage being reflected in poorer long term outcomes.
133. Coles et al (2010) describe several forms of later disadvantage including more persistent unemployment, lower job security and low pay. For many low pay is a lifelong existence that passes from one generation to the next' (Living wage commission, 2014, p13).
134. This is important in the context that many of those in the bottom 10% of earners remained in the same position over time. The majority of people who were able to improve their position only achieved a marginal difference (Magda, 2008). Furthermore Dickens (2000) demonstrates that as many as 1 in 5 of those in the bottom earning segments dropped out of work altogether, meaning their situation actually deteriorated during this period.

Health and wellbeing

135. Whilst having poor health can limit an individual's work opportunities, periods of unemployment and low socio-economic status can also have a significant impact on a person's health and wellbeing (WHO, 2013).
136. Professor John Ashton has called the large number of NEETs a "public health time-bomb" (Gallagher, 2013) due to way in which long term unemployment and remaining at a distance from the labour market increase the likelihood of negative long-term consequences such as ill health (Brown and Hesketh, 2004).
137. The health impacts are also thought to be greater for those in precarious employment situations, either without contracts or on non-fixed temporary contracts (Artazcoz et al, 2005). In this study women experienced a greater prevalence of mental health issues than men and were more likely to be working in flexible/ precarious employment (ibid).
138. Similarly there is evidence that whilst 27% of female employees are paid below the living wage, just 16% of male employees are in the same position. (Living Wage Commission, 2014). Whilst low pay does not specifically indicate precarious employment it is likely that these jobs will be least secure and are associated with people experiencing several periods of unemployment between low paid jobs, with expected negative impacts on mental and physical health.
139. Building on this understanding, studies have shown that as many as 40% of jobless people have symptoms of mental illness compared to 25% of the general population (Princes Trust 2014). Similarly the long term unemployed are twice as likely as other young people to have been described anti-depressants (ibid). There is a clear gender divide here too, with young women more likely to suffer from low self-esteem, feel inferior to others or have been prescribed anti-depressants (ibid).

Crime

140. One impact that is often thought to be associated with people becoming NEET is an increased participation in crime (e.g. Lee and Wright, 2011; Bell and Blanchflower 2010). Some estimates put the cost of youth disadvantage resulting in crime at £23 million per week (Prince's Trust 2010) and highlight the ongoing negative consequences of involvement in crime to both individuals and society (Lee et al 2012). Caution should be applied to interpreting these findings. Firstly, we should consider the possible mutually reinforcing relationship between crime and unemployment (Thornberry and Christensen, 1984) which makes us aware of the complexity of people's circumstances.
141. Secondly, whilst it may be true that there is a higher level of crime amongst young people NEET, only a minority of that group are involved in the criminal justice system. This suggests there are other factors at play in causing criminal activity amongst those people over and above their status as NEET.
142. Although there is some difficulty in deriving an exact figure from existing data meaning estimates should be used with caution, it appears that even where being NEET is associated with increased criminal activity, the connection appears far weaker for young women than young men.

Policy and Practice

143. Approaches to tackling NEETs are generally categorised as either strategic, preventive or reintegration strategies (Nelson and O'Donnell, 2012; Maguire, 2013). Figure 2 shows a number of approaches that have been used broken down into these categories. It is useful to discuss these broad categories before looking at the details of what current policy and activity is in place to reduce the number of NEETs.
144. Broadly, the national strategic approaches are focus on funding for youth training and employment opportunities; making it more attractive for employers to recruit young employees and apprentices; and the coordination of wider efforts.
145. Similarly, at a local level, Local Authorities are able to coordinate local resources role, draw together local organisations and agencies and gather information about those who need support, using local knowledge to understand how different approaches will work in the local setting.
146. Preventive measures seek to: reduce disengagement from education; support school to work transitions, provide work experience at a young age and improve information and advice given to young people.
147. Reintegration strategies are linked to developing skills and work readiness following an unsuccessful school to work transition. These approaches have to address multiple challenges due to the differences between groups of NEET young people and consider the broad range of individual circumstances and needs (Nelson and O'Donnell, 2012; Grist and Cheetham, 2011). Examples can be seen in the development of new formal and informal learning programmes; information, advice and support for jobseekers and more intensive support to improve health and psychological well-being; and assistance to overcome other barriers such as homelessness or lone-parenthood.

151. BIS (2013) has indicated the Government's desire to focus on employability skills; basic and foundational skills; life skills; and vocational courses, affording recognition that gaining basic skills is a critical factor in securing employment and to ensure that young people remain engaged in education and training until 18 to allow these skills to be developed sufficiently. However some have argued this policy ignores the reasons young people become disengaged from education at a much younger age (Evans et al, 2009). It has also been criticised for failing to address the underlying problems that prevent young people engaging or developing essential skills (Gracey and Kelley, 2013) with some claiming it will merely keep many young people locked into an education system that fails to meet their needs, pushing the problem downstream (ibid) delaying the problem until they are 18.

Youth Contract

152. Although new enrolments to the Youth Contract ended in August 2014, it was a *strategic* approach designed to incentivise employers to recruit and train young people as well as support young people and fund local interventions. Payments were made to employers who took on 18-24 year olds who had been unemployed for more than 6 months. Further incentives were available for offering apprenticeships and employing 16-17 year old NEETs. As well as funding these incentives and local initiatives, work experience and more intensive support was offered through Job Centre Plus. Despite criticism that the youth contract did little to get more young people in to long term work (TUC, 2012), the additional work experience gained may have been of some value and result in less time spent unemployed at a later date (Macmillan, 2012). However, employers complained that awareness of the scheme was low and that participants in the scheme may viewed negatively (DWP, 2014).
153. Caution is also needed in assessing the value of the Youth Contract as it only applied to those claiming Job Seekers Allowance at a time when 35% of NEETs were not claiming benefits (ACEVO, 2012). Others questioned the ability of the Youth Contract to change the NEET levels whilst there was no significant growth in the youth labour market (Lee et al, 2012). Additionally, it was claimed that a large number of those that entered employment through the Youth Contract would have done so anyway, making the programme an inefficient use of public funds (LGA, 2013).
154. Furthermore, whilst the overall engagement in work and training of participants in the Youth Contract rose by 12 percentage points in its second year (DfE, 2014), low levels of enrolment, delayed payments, restrictive eligibility criteria and a lack of knowledge about the personal circumstances of young people may have limited its success (ibid.)

The Work Programme

155. The Work Programme is not an age-specific programme but a broader 'welfare to work' programme that offers intensive back to work support for the long-term unemployed. Young people are however referred after a shorter period of time. This is an important recognition of the need to intervene to reduce the length of time people spent in unemployment.
156. Similarly to the Youth Contract, the Work Programme is spread over several years and must be assessed accordingly. The first two years showed poor performance but more recently the success rate appears to have risen and is comparable with previous schemes with 27% of participants returning to work that lasted 6 months or more (National Audit Office (NAO), 2014) although there are concerns about the ability of current measures to accurately reflect performance (ibid). Currently 58% of 18-24 year olds on the programme find work (Worrall 2013) although some pessimism remains about the number of people moving into long-term jobs. The proportion of young people going into Elementary Occupations (low skill) has risen from 13-27% suggesting that many are entering low paid, precarious jobs (Birdwell, Grist and Margo, 2011). This would suggest that the Work Programme will struggle to provide a long

term solution as the insecure nature of these jobs is likely to lead to a significant proportion of people experiencing further spell of unemployment in the future.

157. As with the Youth Contract, to be eligible for the Work Programme, there is a requirement for young people to be claiming Job Seekers Allowance or Employment Support Allowance for a continuous period of more than 9 months. As a result, it is estimated that as little as 10% of 18-24 year old NEETs would be on The Work Programme. Furthermore contractors have reduced the amount they are spending on the hardest to reach groups (NAO, 2014)
158. Since a large number of people churn in and out of short-term jobs with periods of unemployment in between, a large number of people, in addition to those who are not claiming benefits, are therefore not eligible for the Work Programme. This group are likely to have limited career options and will often lack the skills or experience to break the cycle of low-pay and unemployment, yet they receive little support to help them overcome these barriers. The Work and Pensions Committee has called for more to be done to identify additional barriers through more rigorous initial assessments (Work and Pensions Committee, 2014)

Apprenticeships

159. The Coalition Government committed to increasing the number of young people taking part in apprenticeships to gain vocational qualifications and work based skills by providing £1.5 billion for apprenticeships in 2013-14 (Mirza-Davies, 2014b), although the funding is slightly more focussed on supporting the 16-18 year old age group.
160. As part of this commitment, the Government funded training costs for those completing apprenticeships at varying levels dependent on the apprentice's age: 100% if the apprentice is aged 16-18; 50% if the apprentice is aged 19-24; and up to 50% if the apprentice is aged 25 or over. This suggests that the apprenticeship scheme has a more *preventive* function than a *reintegration* function despite both aspects being important.
161. For the first 12 months of an apprenticeship the apprentice receives the minimum wage for apprentices (currently £2.73- due to rise to £3.30 in October). Apprentices over the age of 19 receive the National Minimum Wage after the first 12 months. It has been argued that the minimum wage for apprentices is too low to make apprenticeships financially viable for many (ACEVO, 2012).
162. Although women account for a slightly higher proportion of apprenticeships starts (53%), over half of female apprentices (51%) were over 25 (the corresponding figure for men was 39%). Many of these older apprentices are likely to be conversions from the existing workforce rather than new roles taken by a young person NEET. Once this is accounted for women are under-represented (especially in the higher value fields such as engineering-BIS 2015) and paid less (largely due to the gender segregation) (Newton and Williams, 2013).
163. One reason that has been proposed to explain the increasing proportion of apprentices who are over 25 is the high entry requirements for many apprenticeships and intense competition is for places, meaning are offered to people already in employment who may already hold other qualifications (Maguire, Spielhofer and Golden, 2012).

Challenges to building on current policy

164. Current policy is failing to have a significant impact on NEET levels. Although recent data shows a slight fall in the number of NEETs, this fails to take account of the long run average levels of NEET. In this longer term context, whilst current strategies for NEET have had some impact, the changes fall in numbers has been inconsistent and too slow to have a significant impact on the lives of many young people who currently find themselves NEET .
165. Furthermore the persistence of a gender gap, with young women consistently more likely to be NEET than young men is a great cause for concern. It is likely that this has arisen because of a lack of recognition about the gender impacts and the lack of gender specific measures (Plantenga, and Lodovici, 2013).

Current Policy Debates - Introduction

166. Several organisations have recently proposed policies that hope to reduce the number of NEETs and provide meaningful progression for those on low pay. Although many are lacking a specific gender focus the research they have carried out provides a useful insight to current debate around youth employment policies.
167. Despite the differing perspectives of each of these reports, it is useful to identify ongoing points of discussion and in particular to highlight areas around which there is broad agreement of the policy direction.
168. **It is important to note that although the ‘Scarred for Life?’ Inquiry will make policy recommendations, for the purpose of this review, Young Women’s Trust is not endorsing any of the policy positions cited hereafter.**

Restructure apprenticeships

169. Drawing on research of other European economies, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR, 2014) has called for a reform of apprenticeships. Following CESI’s (2012) findings that many apprenticeships are taken up by over 25’s and the understanding that apprenticeships in other European economies are more rigorous, it is suggested that apprenticeships be reformed.
170. There is some concern that apprenticeships are not leading enough people to develop high level skills (Steedman and Vaitilingam, 2011); under the IPPR proposals apprenticeships would only be available to under 23s, would be at level 3 (A-level equivalent) or above and would include significant off-the-job training. This call for more rigorous apprenticeship reflects both the recent review by Chris Husbands for the Labour party policy review.
171. The CBI (2014) also calls for the system of apprenticeships to be simplified, making it easier for both employers and young apprentices. This is echoed by the CSJ (2014) which has called for an online, UCAS style website for applications to both jobs and apprenticeships for young people to help ease the transition into work.
172. There seems to be a significant body of evidence which suggests the current apprenticeship system does not fully meet the requirements of young people or business (Work Foundation,

2013; Sutton Trust, 2013; AELP,2014) . There are however disagreements as to the nature and extent of the reforms that should happen.

Investment in Skills

173. There is widespread agreement that investing in skills for young people is an important aspect both for improving current opportunities but also for reducing future disadvantage and low pay.
174. IPPR (2014) calls for an expansion of the National Citizen Service to increase opportunities for 16-17 year olds to take part and develop teamwork, communication and leadership skills.
175. Robin Simmons (Simmons et al, 2014) advocates a Youth Resolution in which local partnerships would work to reduce levels of NEET by investing in training of young people. This would be underpinned by a commitment by employers to pay under 21s the full National Minimum Wage and to provide training plans for all under 25s in return for a kite mark, additional support and advice and discounted business rates.
176. Social Market Foundation (2014) highlights how 25% of those in the lowest paid bracket remain there for 10 years. It claims that increasing skills and productivity is the best remedy for persistent low pay and calls for a 'Skills for Progress' scheme. This would apply to under 24s in low pay for over a year; employers would receive financial incentives to invest in training dependent on the pay of the trainee increasing within 2 years.
177. The Work Foundation (2014) calls for an expansion of the National Careers Service and adult skills budget whilst NIACE (2014) call for a larger review of adult skills, personal skills accounts for all adults and an entitlement to regular career reviews. This points to a wider desire to develop the adult skills agenda, though there is further research required to understand the best mechanisms for reducing the numbers of NEETs through increased skills.

Refresh Careers advice

178. Ofsted (2013) and the Education Committee (2013) have both expressed concerns about the current state of careers advice, particularly citing the lack of consistency, the lack of expertise within schools and the focus on promoting academic routes.
179. The Education Committee (ibid) and IPPR (2014) both highlight a potential role for the National Careers Service to support schools more in careers guidance with Ofsted also advocating the call for stronger links between employers and schools which have been promoted elsewhere (CIPD,2014; CBI, 2014).
180. Meanwhile the CSJ (2014) has called for 'Progression planning' through Job Centre Plus to support young people into work with a clear career path ahead of them. This is mirrored by the ongoing support that NIACE (2014) seeks in calling for ongoing career reviews and support for progression and skills development.

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