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OUTREACH AND  
GUIDANCE IN  
UPSKILLING POLICIES

UNITED  
KINGDOM

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THEMATIC PERSPECTIVES



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## 1. Introduction

People with low qualifications have increasingly weaker career prospects within the EU. Early disengagement from education and training is an acute issue in many Member States, frequently leading to unemployment and inactivity. The rate of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) is particularly high among those with low qualifications.

Adults with low qualifications are three times more prone to fall into a situation of long term unemployment (LTU), with associated social and psychological risks. Due to lack of information and demotivation, many LTU do not search for training solutions which could enable them to change their situation. To be successful in identifying, contacting and reengaging NEETs and long term unemployed in learning activities, employment services have to develop effective outreach services.

To address the challenge of low qualification levels the European Commission has developed two fundamental initiatives, to finance national programmes:

- The Youth Guarantee, aimed at providing young people under 25 years of age with a job or a learning solution within four months after drop-out; and
- Upskilling Pathways, aimed at providing adults over 25 years of age with an opportunity to acquire upper secondary qualifications in a flexible way.

The success of both initiatives in addressing the needs of NEET's and long term unemployed depends, to a large extent, on the capacity of Member States in improving guidance services and establishing effective outreach mechanisms. Given the relative lack of knowledge that exists on current outreach practice, this is a priority for Cedefop and ReferNet settings.

This article provides a brief overview of NEETs in the UK and an introduction to national outreach strategies. A range of outreach activities exist for young people across the UK, and are often regional and local initiatives. The article contains two examples of good practice describing activities identified as relevant to the article by the UK ReferNet agency and Cedefop.

## 2. Characteristics of NEETs and long term unemployed in the UK

800,000 people aged 16-24 were NEET in the first quarter of 2017, representing 11.2% of the age group. 42% of all young people in the UK who were NEET were looking for work and available for work and therefore classified as unemployed; the remainder were either not looking for work and / or not available for work and therefore classified as economically inactive <sup>(1)</sup>. The proportion of 15-19 year-olds who are NEET in the UK is above the OECD average, but below average for 20-24 year olds. 49.3% of 16-24 year-olds classified as NEET are women, which is the lowest percentage since comparable records began in 2001. 16-24 year olds with disabilities are more likely to be NEET (30%) than those without disabilities (9%). Having no qualifications at lower secondary level furthermore increases the likelihood of being NEET for the 16-24 age group (25%) compared to those qualified to GCSE level (EQF level 3) and above (10%) <sup>(2)</sup>. 385,000 people had been unemployed for over 12 months in January 2017, which is a rate that has reduced to a fairly low amount in the last few years. The unemployment rate for those aged from 16 to 24 is consistently higher than that for older age groups though <sup>(3)</sup>.

The Longitudinal Study of Young People in England <sup>(4)</sup> additionally identified that young people eligible for free school meals <sup>(5)</sup> are more likely to be NEET than those who are not, and that those who have been excluded or suspended from school at some point are also more likely to become NEET. The study furthermore showed that 14% of 19 year-olds in 2010 had been NEET for over a year at some stage.

In terms of ethnic background, 16-24 year olds from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds were most likely to be NEET (13%), whilst those from Indian, Chinese and Other Asian backgrounds were least likely (8%) according to data from 2016 <sup>(6)</sup>. The proportion of NEETs from areas with high levels of residential and school segregation in terms of ethnic backgrounds appear to be further disadvantaged. Similar disadvantage are found in some White British communities in areas of industrial decline. Gypsies and Irish Travellers, although smaller in number, also face persistent disadvantage. Pupils from several ethnic minorities are; however, increasingly matching or out-performing the educational performance at secondary

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<sup>1</sup> [Young people not in education, employment or training UK](#) (2017), Office for National Statistics

<sup>2</sup> [NEET: Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training](#) (2016), Brown, J

<sup>3</sup> [UK labour market](#) (2017), Office for National Statistics

<sup>4</sup> [Longitudinal Study of Young People in England](#) (2011), Department for Education

<sup>5</sup> Free school meal eligibility is often used to measure pupil socioeconomic disadvantage in the UK, [Apply for free school meals](#) (2017), Department for Education

<sup>6</sup> [The Casey Review: A review into opportunity and integration](#) (2016), Casey, L

education level of White British pupils, at the same time as a trend showing White British boys achieving poorer results.

A review into alternative education provision (Pupil Referral Units) discovered that White British males were over represented. Working class girls, Traveller / Gypsy / Roma pupils and Black Caribbean young people are disproportionately likely to drop out of school or be excluded yet do not frequently participate in alternative education provision. Mental illness can also form a long-term barrier for young people's participation in education or employment <sup>(7)</sup>.

The Careers and Enterprise Company identified a number of geographical areas in England based on employers' level of engagement with schools, education outcomes, how prepared young people are for the labour market and the number of NEETs <sup>(8)</sup>. Additional funding for careers advice and employer engagement initiatives have subsequently been routed through the organisation. Its prioritisation indicators paint a picture of the system's efficiency in getting young people from school to work. The areas likely to be least efficient at this are those where businesses are less engaged with schools, education outcomes are lower, and young people are rated as less prepared for work and more likely to be NEET.

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<sup>7</sup> [Alternative Provision: Effective Practice and Post 16 Transition](#) (2017), Tate, S and Greatbatch, D

<sup>8</sup> [Understanding the careers cold spots](#) (2016), the Careers and Enterprise Company

### 3. National outreach strategies in the education, training and employment sectors

Long-term NEETs in the 18-24 age group are referred to the Work Programme - the Government's welfare-to-work programme. The new welfare-to-work programme - the Work and Health Programme - is due to be launched in autumn 2017. The Programme will target people who with specialist support are likely to be able to find work within 12 months. It takes the place of both the Work Programme and Work Choice (a voluntary support programme for people who are disabled), although many jobseekers who would previously have been supported by the Work Programme will now receive support directly through Jobcentre Plus rather than the Work and Health Programme.

Strategies in the areas of outreach, NEETs and the long-term unemployed who are the furthest from the labour market, and are not engaging with employment or careers services, are generally separate in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to those in the UK. Initiatives working towards targets within these strategies are furthermore often local and involving a range of stakeholders.

A Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services report from 2011 <sup>(9)</sup> identified a number of strategies for engagement or re-engagement operating at macro-economic; strategic; and practice levels. Funding are an important motivator for young people and employers, but strategies also aim to increase flexibility and personalisation, enhance information and guidance, and develop positive relationships of trust, responsibility and respect between adults and young people. Employer engagement is also considered an important part of strategy development, as well as working with education providers to provide mentoring support and careers guidance. According to the Social Mobility Commission, the most intensive social inclusion and outreach initiatives have historically been focused on London, though coverage is now expanding. Most schools in London with a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils work in partnership with local employers, whilst this is not so common in other parts of the UK <sup>(10)</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> [Strategies to re-engage young people not in education, employment or training: A Rapid Review](#) (2011), Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services

<sup>10</sup> [The class ceiling: Increasing access to the leading professions](#) (2017), the Sutton Trust

## England

The Building Engagement, Building Futures strategy <sup>(11)</sup> prioritises five actions to maximise the proportion of 16-24 year olds who are participating in education, training and work:

- raising educational attainment in school and beyond to ensure that young people have the skills they need to compete in a global economy;
- helping local partners to provide effective and coordinated services that support all young people, including the most vulnerable, putting us on track to achieve full participation for 16-17 year olds;
- encouraging and incentivising employers to inspire and recruit young people by offering more high quality Apprenticeships and work experience places;
- ensuring that work pays and giving young people the personalised support they need to find it, through Universal Credit, the Work Programme and our Get Britain Working measures; and
- putting in place a Youth Contract to help get young people learning or earning before long term damage is done.

More recently, the government pledged in the post-16 skills plan <sup>(12)</sup> to continue to provide support to those young people still not in education, employment or training, including prioritising free or subsidised training for 19–24 year-olds with low-level skills through adult funding arrangements.

## Scotland

The More Choices, More Chances strategy to reduce the proportion of young people NEET in Scotland <sup>(13)</sup> encourages delivery of more opportunities to all young people, even those who are most disengaged, by:

- stemming the flows into NEET – prevention rather than cure;
- having a system-wide (pre and post 16) focus on, ambitions for, ownership of – and accountability for – the NEET group;
- prioritising education and training outcomes for the NEET group as a step towards lifelong employability, given their low attainment profile; and

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<sup>11</sup> [Building Engagement, Building Futures: Our Strategy to Maximise the Participation of 16-24 Year Olds in Education, Training and Work](#) (2011), HM Government

<sup>12</sup> [Post-16 Skills Plan](#) (2016), Department for Education

<sup>13</sup> [More Choices, More Chances: A Strategy to Reduce the Proportion of Young People not in Education, Employment or Training in Scotland](#) (2006) Scottish Executive



- positioning NEET reduction as one of the key indicators for measuring the pre and post 16 systems' success.

More recently, the Commission for developing the young workforce included recommendations in its final report to require specific measures to be taken in relation to including all groups in the labour market. In particular this included expanding the career choices of young people from black and minority ethnic communities, aid transitions of young disabled people through education and employment and improve educational and employment outcomes of young care leavers. The Developing the young workforce report <sup>(14)</sup> focuses on the following themes in order to raise the ambitions for the young workforce:

- increasing the routes from school into employment, or further education which is closely linked to employment;
- engaging with young people, parents, teachers and practitioners, partners and employers to promote and shape the offer;
- supporting teachers and practitioners to develop children's and young people's learning about the world of work;
- providing earlier relevant labour market focussed careers advice when young people need it;
- embedding meaningful employer involvement; and
- consolidating partnership working with colleges and other training providers.

## **Wales**

Local authorities in Wales are working with Careers Wales, youth services, schools, providers of post-16 education and training, the voluntary sector and other partners in reducing the number of young NEETs through the implementation of the Welsh Government's Youth Engagement and Progression Framework. A review of the framework found that its components listed below are effective at increasing youth engagement when implemented as part of a strategy <sup>(15)</sup>. The framework aims to:

- identify young people most at risk of disengagement;
- provide better brokerage and co-ordination of support;

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<sup>14</sup> [Developing the Young Workforce: Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy](#) (2014), the Scottish Government

<sup>15</sup> [Youth Engagement and Progression Framework: Formative evaluation follow-up study](#) (2016), ICF International

- provide stronger tracking and transition of young people through the system and ensure provision meets the needs of young people;
- strengthen employability skills and opportunities for employment; and
- provide greater accountability for better outcomes for young people.

## **Northern Ireland**

Pathways to Success is Northern Ireland's strategy, which comprises various schemes aiming to prevent exclusion and promote participation amongst young people that are NEET, or at risk of becoming so. A 2015 report found evidence of progress against the strategy's objectives that are overseen by a NEET Advisory Group and supported by a NEET Strategy Forum. It is considered that the partnership approach between policy makers and practitioners is adding value (<sup>16</sup>).

The Northern Ireland Executive's Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) Strategy (<sup>17</sup>) emphasises the role of young people in its commitment to improving community relations and in continuing the journey to a more united and shared society. T: BUC considers children and young people crucial in resolving conflict and creating a more peaceful society, and commits to a number of headline actions, one of which is the United Youth Programme (see chapter 4). The strategy recognises that alienation amongst young people is closely correlated to issues around poor educational attainment, economic inactivity, social exclusion, sectarianism and anti-social behaviour. The United Youth Programme is aimed at providing flexible, high-quality opportunities to help address these issues.

Learning from a United Youth Programme pilot phase during 2015/16 (see case study below) has been utilised during the planning for a major PEACE IV cross-border programme which will target young people in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland, who are disadvantaged, excluded or marginalised; have deep social and emotional needs; and who are at risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour, violence or dissident paramilitary activity, between 2017 and 2021.

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<sup>16</sup> [Evaluation of Pathways to Success NI: Final Report](#) (2015), Wilson, T, et al.

<sup>17</sup> [Together: Building a United Community Strategy](#) (2013), Northern Ireland Executive Office

## 4. Example: United Youth Programme

The United Youth Programme, a headline action within the Together: Building a United Community Strategy (see chapter 3), was piloted with a view to developing a design framework for a larger scale, future programme. Operating according to a United Youth 'Outcomes and Principles Framework' that had been created through an extended co-design process with young people and other stakeholders, the twelve pilot projects commenced in August 2015 and ended in March 2016. Some 350 young people aged 16-24 years and who were NEET took part across the pilot projects that tested a range of approaches to developing positive and sustainable change. The 'principles' aspect of the Outcomes and Principles Framework set out the requirement for pilot providers to utilise a high quality, youth work approach to deliver their pilot programmes. (The pilot projects are outlined in table 2 in the annex at chapter 6.).

### **Identification and recruitment of participants**

The target group for the United Youth pilots was young people aged 16-24 who were NEET in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and who were considered to be hardest to reach. The future programme will extend its reach to 14-24 year olds. Participants included young people in need of mental health support, young people with alcohol or drug issues, or disabilities, young people who have been in care, homeless and / or living in unsettled accommodation, early school leavers, lone parents, long term unemployed and those involved with Juvenile Justice / Probation. Approximately two thirds of participants were male and over half were in the 16 to 19 age bracket.

As participants are coming from a range of backgrounds and have a variety of needs and issues, a range of methods was used to aid recruitment. These included promoting the programmes through Jobs and Benefits Offices as well as asking for referrals from other youth and community organisations, social workers, probation officers and community leaders. Outreach to young people through street youth work, family contacts and community channels also featured strongly. The programmes were also promoted via social media and printed materials and word of mouth, with young people playing a role in identifying and encouraging peers to take part.

Experiences from the pilot programmes indicated that recruitment was time consuming and challenging, particularly for providers with limited experience of

working with the target group. Young people with low confidence were often initially reluctant to participate. This highlighted the importance at the recruitment stage of experienced, locally based staff with knowledge of local communities and with the skills to effectively engage with young people in the target group.

### **Caseload management**

Pilot providers were given a high degree of autonomy to develop and deliver their programmes to meet the needs of their participants, within the parameters of the United Youth Outcomes and Principles Framework. Providers committed to working with young people in a participative way, which allowed each participant to influence their own learning. Providers' and the young people's ability to choose which activities and methods to include in the programmes appear to have had a positive impact on retention amongst participants (65.4%, or 76.5% when young people leaving very early are discounted). The co-design approach which continued after the design stage and into the delivery phase gave young people a feeling of control over their journey and ensured activities were relevant and attractive. Such flexibility moreover facilitates innovation and the ability to make quick adjustments to how the learning is structured.

Experiences regarding the length and structure of the programmes have shown that increasing the intensity of learning from Monday to Wednesday and then reducing it towards the weekend generally worked best. Furthermore, the overall intensity of the programmes was generally increased as the participants grew in confidence as the programme went on. It was sometimes necessary to keep in touch outside of the 'formal' programme hours during the pilot phase with those participants who struggled to remain engaged. Providers made phone calls, met in person and liaised with family and friends, according to need.

Experience from the pilots indicates that the ideal length of a participant's programme varies from person to person, according to their individual needs. Providers generally believed that programmes ought to be a minimum of six months duration to prepare the young person for transition to further learning or employment.

Whilst the providers had a large degree of autonomy in how the pilots were delivered, they were required to comply with robust reporting and financial monitoring arrangements. Providers reported on finance and administrative issues through a system that enabled government to review and adjust the programme accordingly.

The review of the United Youth pilot phase identified scope for streamlining this reporting system to maximise the time available to project workers to spend working face to face with the young people. The review also identified that the collaborative, co-design dimension of the engagement with government for the delivery of the pilot projects was welcomed by the pilot providers, who found it supportive and helpful.

### **Upskilling measures**

Participants recruited to the programme had varied levels and experience of formal education and qualifications, e.g. some had a few entry level qualifications, others had partially completed higher education, and some had no completed qualifications at all. Participants' learning paths on the pilots were, consequently, not the same but were always focused on the four outcome areas; personal development, citizenship, good relations and employability. The expectation was that each participant would be enabled to progress in relation to each outcome area according to their particular needs.

Providers typically started with the personal development aspect which focused on social and emotional capabilities such as self-awareness, personal aspirations and interaction with other people, and always based on initial assessment of individual need, through formal mentorships or via other project staff. Personal development was achieved through one-to-one contact with staff and through group activities. Group activities were commonly used to facilitate learning in relation to the remaining three outcome areas. Active citizenship activities encouraged young people to discuss and engage with social issues, and to take part in volunteering activities, whilst the good relations aspect aimed to bring young people from different backgrounds together to increase mutual respect and understanding. Finally, the pilot programmes aimed to improve the young people's employability by developing their soft skills, such as communication and team work, and by exploring and raising aspirations.

Most of the learning included in the pilot programmes was informal, but the providers had the opportunity to deliver formally recognised learning as well. Most recognised learning was taken at qualifications framework levels 1 and 2 (EQF levels 2 and 3) in areas such as diversity and good relations, personal and social development, vocational skills, youth work, peer mentorship, peer leadership and challenging offensive behaviour, as well as first aid and health and safety. Informal learning comprised outdoor pursuits, residential and overseas experiences, cultural visits,

work experience, volunteering and social action, all of which enabled the young people to also learn from each other. Giving young people the opportunity to co-design their learning programmes enhanced their ability to structure activities for both themselves and their peers.

Table 1 displays the primary associations that staff and young people most commonly made between programme activities and the four outcome areas.

**Table 1 - Relationship between activities and outcomes (<sup>18</sup>)**

Outcome areas	Activities											
	Group work	Mentoring or other one to one support	Skills development and training	Residential events	Volunteering	Cultural visits	Social action	Work experience	International visits	Adventure / outdoor pursuits	Performance / arts based	Sport / physical activity
Personal development												
Citizenship												
Good relations												
Employability												

The review of the pilot programmes found that they had enhanced participants' confidence and ability to communicate with others as well as improving their motivation and control over their own lives. Participants also gained more knowledge of other support services and were subsequently more likely to use them. Generally, the improvements in their capabilities led to positive outcomes such as employment or engagement in training or education. 63% of participants proceeded to an employment or further training destination, with 80% remaining engaged in some form of positive activity overall taking into account post-programme volunteering or participation in a course, in addition to employment outcomes or engagements in follow-on training programmes.

### Assessment of participants

The review of the pilot phase of activity emphasised that measuring the young people's progress, via both formal and informal learning, helped them understand their achievements, as well as assisting the pilot providers to understand the impact of their work. The review recommended that provider self-evaluation and evaluation

<sup>18</sup> [Final Report: Evaluation of the United Youth Programme Pilot Phase 2015 – 2016](#) (2016), Centre for Effective Services

planning is included from the beginning of future programmes as this type of monitoring contributes to a more consistent, cross-programme approach.

### **Guidance and counselling**

Activities such as work experience, volunteering and gaining general employability skills were designed to present ideas for possible future careers to the young people and raise aspiration generally. In the review of the pilot programmes, almost all participants interviewed stated that the experience had given them clearer aspirations for the future, including preferred career paths. The pilot programmes encouraged peer learning and offered the young people the chance to plan, structure and help deliver the learning activities, which inspired many to consider a career in the area of youth work and other support or socially focused services.

### **Financing**

The pilot programme offered participants an attendance-linked incentive payment (a daily rate of £8 up to a maximum of £40 per week, whilst they retained any social welfare benefit entitlement, and were reimbursed for travel and childcare costs as necessary. The review identified that these arrangements were an effective means of encouraging and maintaining participant attendance. Within some pilots a £200-£250 personal development allowance was made available via which young people could secure courses through their pilot provider such as driving / motorcycling training, IT training, fitness / sports coaching, hairdressing, first aid, and studio recording / digital media training.

Providers received government funding for delivering the pilot programmes. Staff costs were generally the major part of the expenditure, with activity costs, payments to participants and project related overhead costs also included.

### **Staffing, staff training and management arrangements**

The programme providers comprised both small and larger organisations, often with a long track record in the industry. Organisations were either based in local communities or operated nation-wide, and some operated with thematic or issue-based remits. All had experience of working with young people, although not all had previously dealt with NEETs.

The teams delivering the pilot programmes generally consisted of a project manager and youth or support workers. The youth and support workers had, on average, ten

years' experience in community youth work or related fields like the youth justice system, working with disadvantaged and / or marginalised groups, working in communities, good relations, and employability training and skills development. Those in management or coordinator roles tended to be more experienced. Staff were employed full-time or part-time in order to handle various responsibilities or to fulfil one specific role.

A high number of staff held, or were in the process of obtaining, a higher education qualification in youth work, social sciences, health, education, or politics. A range of upper secondary level qualifications (EQF level 4) in areas related to health and social care, mental health, addictive behaviours, community relations / diversity, conflict resolution, or managing challenging behaviour were also represented. Furthermore, a high number of staff showed an interest in continuous professional development in areas such as LGBT issues, sexual health, employability, and performing arts.

The pilot programme was administered and supported centrally by the United Youth Programme Team comprising staff from the NI Department for the Economy.

### **Collaboration with other stakeholders**

Pilot providers highlighted the value and the necessity of working in partnership with other organisations to support recruitment and programme delivery. Programme components could be facilitated in partnership with relevant stakeholders, who could also offer follow-up support to the young people as required. While some partnership arrangements for project delivery were formal and linked to the project funding contract, other partnerships and linkages were informal and often extensive. Organisations found that it worked best when they had prior experience of working successfully with, and alongside, other agencies where trust had been built and lines of communication already established.

The review highlighted that collaboration with other organisations in terms of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation made processes more responsive to the needs and interests of the participants. It also identified however, that good communication and dialogue, between central authorities overseeing the work and the relevant local agencies delivering it, are also needed to ensure congruence with public policy objectives.



## 5. Example: Talent Match

Talent Match is a programme that has been helping to improve young people's employment opportunities in 21 areas across England since 2012. Local partnerships have been given funding to find new creative solutions to equip disengaged young people with skills and work experience, as well as raising their confidence, to overcome barriers to further formal training, employment and entrepreneurship. According to the 2015 annual review of the programme, nearly 7,000 young people had taken part in Talent Match. There is evidence that the programme is moving young people towards employment, but that it is still a challenge for many to find long-term jobs. However, nearly all those who had secured employment or self-employment report that the assistance received had been important in securing these outcomes.

### **Identification and recruitment of participants**

The programme targets NEETs and those young people who are furthest away from employment. 20% of those taking part in programme activities include those who have not registered with the benefits, work and training services, and who are consequently less likely to be targeted by other types of support and therefore often experience strong barriers to gaining employment and the skills needed to work. As these young people often don't make use of these services, Talent Match workers have reached out to young people in youth clubs, community centres, leisure centres, cinemas, youth services, doctor's surgeries, libraries, shops, pupil referral units, social services, probation services, and family information services. Sheffield city region's Talent Match programme engages young people by arranging half-day events introducing activities such as sports, craft courses and work experience to disengaged youngsters in the hope that this will spark their interest in the programme <sup>(19)</sup>.

Young people in the age group 18-24 who have been NEET in excess of 12 months are eligible to participate. A review of the programme <sup>(20)</sup> found that the target groups typically included

- black and minority ethnic groups;
- ex-offenders;

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<sup>19</sup> [Talent Match Enterprise](#) (website accessed June 2017), Groundwork South Yorkshire

<sup>20</sup> [Talent Match Evaluation and Learning Contract: 2013-19 Annual Report](#) (2015) , Sheffield Hallam University and Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research

- Traveller communities;
- homeless people;
- lone parents, young parents and care givers;
- people engaged in alcohol or substance misuse;
- people living in isolated rural areas;
- people suffering from mental health problems;
- people with low levels of literacy and numeracy;
- people with physical or learning disabilities; and
- refugees and asylum seekers.

A large number of participants have not achieved generally acceptable results for progression to further study from lower secondary level when starting the Talent Match programme, although only 8% had no qualifications at all. Furthermore, in excess of 20% reported to have a disability, almost two thirds were male, 19% had children, and the baseline questionnaire completed by participants showed a higher proportion of instances of mental ill health compared with UK adults in the same age group surveyed by the Office for National Statistics. Transport issues are furthermore a barrier to participation for many young people, so more than half of those young people furthest from the labour market are supported with travel expenses by Talent Match.

Figures showing the numbers of long-term unemployed young people claiming Jobseekers Allowance have been used to identify which geographical areas of the country are in the most need of funding. Local voluntary and community organisations also have an active role in identifying the young people in greatest need of support.

### **Caseload management**

Programmes focus on giving young people structured opportunities in the public, private as well as the voluntary and community sectors whilst matching young people's talents to local job markets. The programmes furthermore engage and support young people through learning activities and promote positive images of young people. Programme activities vary according to local needs, but a number of core activities form part of most programmes as outlined in the figure below.

**Figure 1: Building blocks of Talent Match projects <sup>(21)</sup>**



Talent Match programmes all aim to support participants on a one-to-one basis tailored to their needs. As the programmes offer personalised, individual support, the caseload depends on the needs and requests of participants. This support commonly consists of information, advice and guidance about careers, personal development advice and practical issues such as support with travel.

**Figure 2: Proportion of young people receiving types of support <sup>(22)</sup>**



### Upskilling measures

Sheffield city region's Talent Match programme specialises in developing practical and transferable skills in young people through creative learning in order to prepare them for work. Informal and formal learning activities range from introductory half-day events, through to camps, community challenges, work placements, social action

<sup>21</sup> [Making Inclusion Work: Reaching Disenfranchised Groups Through Work-Based Learning](#) (2017), Institute for Public Policy Research

<sup>22</sup> [Talent Match Evaluation and Learning Contract: 2013-19 Annual Report](#) (2015), Sheffield Hallam University and Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research

projects or even training and business support, which are designed to build employability skills and confidence, and finally as personalised support from an Empowerment Coach to build the necessary skills to progress to employment or further study. Employability support may include job search assistance, coaching, bespoke training, mock interviews and preparation for self-employment.

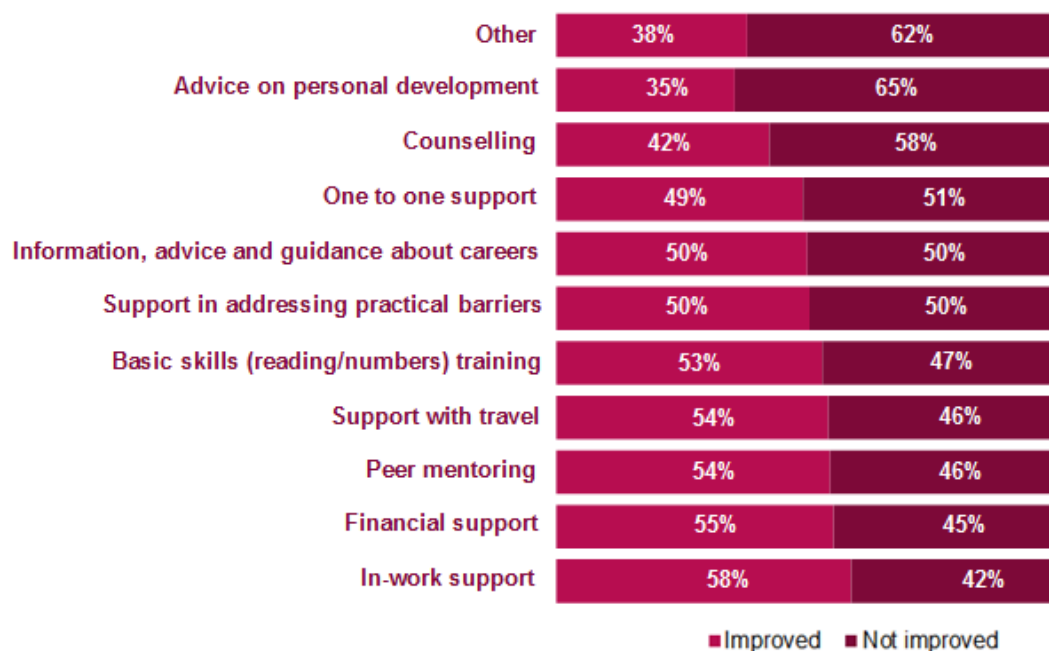
Formal training comprises acquisition of basic skills and occupational skills obtained through vocational training and apprenticeships. Short work experience periods and structured volunteering combined with preparatory skills development are often completed before formal training. In-work Talent Match support, such as workplace buddy support, peer mentoring and coaching, are also offered.

The length of the upskilling phase varies depending on the starting point of the participant and the type of activities, but the London Talent Match programme requires at least six months of job-specific training. The learner journey typically comprises five one-day taster experiences for youngsters to gain an understanding of the career options. This is followed by a two to six-week work placement to develop necessary skills and finally, participants are given the opportunity to start job-specific training in an apprenticeship or in an entry level job role organised by the programme's support workers. The final step of the learning journey is generally paid employment.

It is vital that young people are ready to start work when they reach the final step in order to keep employers interested in the programme. Programme providers report that it can take a significant amount of time to prepare some young people for employment. Employers report that they are pleased with the providers' preparation and screening of candidates to make sure they are suitable for specific jobs. Not all programmes contain long-term work based learning or employment, and focus rather on pre-apprenticeship training and preparatory job skills.

Young people are involved in the design and implementation of the programmes (see chapter 5, guidance and counselling section). Such involvement has reportedly increased confidence and empowerment in those young people in addition to giving them new ideas and energy. The figure below shows how participants rate the effectiveness of Talent Match activities in relation to gaining employment:

**Figure 3: Progression towards the labour market by form of support received <sup>(23)</sup>**



### Assessment of participants

Participants are assessed upon entry to the programme to produce personal development plans. Participation in the activities is voluntary for young people, so reviews of the programme have found that drop-out rates are sometimes high.

The Talent Match Programme is externally evaluated annually based on self-reported measures submitted through a Common Data Framework (CDF). Participants and providers contribute with data that is collected in a shape of an online questionnaire from the beginning of the programme and at the three, six, 12, 18 and 24 months stages. The CDF provides an understanding of young people’s progress towards employment and also give indications on their progress within the labour market as well as their health, family circumstances and housing situation. This allows monitoring of who the participants are, programme activities and their effectiveness, and finally whether the participants have improved their labour market outcomes. The figure below shows how participants rated their own abilities prior to starting the programme:

<sup>23</sup> [Talent Match Evaluation and Learning Contract: 2013-19 Annual Report](#) (2015) , Sheffield Hallam University and Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research

**Figure 4: Proportion of young people agreeing with statements regarding skills (<sup>24</sup>)**



The questionnaires the participants fill in during the programme follow the My Journey Scale that was developed by the Princes Trust (see appendix), in which young people indicate how accomplished they believe they are in certain skills. Annual reviews of the Talent Match Programme show evidence of participants moving closer to employment in terms of possession of skills and raised confidence, although not all obtain employment as a result of the programme.

### **Guidance and counselling**

Support staff and mentors from voluntary organisations, such as Princes Trust, meet with participants to try to match their hobbies and interests to a relevant job or training course. Mentors also help the young people to set goals and targets whilst encouraging the participants to make their own decisions based on the information provided. Contact may also continue after the young person completed the programme as support to progress in work is often needed. This support from voluntary organisations can also be helpful to small and medium sized employers that may not have the time and resources available to provide it themselves. A young person participating in the Talent Match programme commented that “It helps young people to become aware of their potential and goals and provides them with the support they need to realise dreams” (<sup>25</sup>).

<sup>24</sup> [Talent Match Evaluation and Learning Contract: 2013-19 Annual Report](#) (2015), Sheffield Hallam University and Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research

<sup>25</sup> [Making Inclusion Work: Reaching Disenfranchised Groups Through Work-Based Learning](#) (2017), Institute for Public Policy Research

Young people act as talent scouts within some of the programmes. These scouts match employers with other young people and try to convince their peers to make contact and test out new jobs. Some programmes even give young people control over parts of the budget and the power to select which employers to approach.

## **Financing**

The Big Lottery Fund (BIG) is providing £108 million towards Talent Match. BIG is the UK's largest community funder in the areas of health, education, environment and charities. Local partnerships apply for funds between £1 million to £10 million to deliver programmes up to a five year period. The programmes are free of charge for participants who may also offer financial assistance with child care costs.

## **Staffing, staff training and management arrangements**

Talent Match workers have a variety of specialisms, including those working with young people with disabilities, young parents and carers, homeless young people and ex-offenders, as well as the areas of enterprise coaching and sports.

## **Collaboration with other stakeholders**

Talent Match is a national programme that brings together employers, education providers and other stakeholders in partnerships led by local authorities. A voluntary or community sector organisation with experience of working with NEETs generally leads the partnerships. Each partnership must demonstrate that all these sectors are represented and are familiar with the local labour market situation to receive funding.

A team of 20 young people were included in developing the programme alongside the Big Lottery Fund and relevant stakeholders. These 20 young people consulted thousands of their peers to include relevant activities that were attractive to the target group. Moreover, young people were involved in selecting a number of provider organisations. Young people are being involved in this way to increase attractiveness and reduce drop-out rates as the programmes comprise activities relevant and interesting to other young people.

Contact with employers through work tasters and work experience create a link between young people and employers that enhances young people's employment opportunities. Those programmes that introduced young people to employers, engaged employers through marketing, dialogue, planning consultations and joint design of actions by specialist programme staff, as well as wage subsidies. Around

60 to 70 percent of young people taken on by employers in the Sheffield city region with a wage subsidy continued in the job after the Talent Match wage funding ceased.



## 6. Annex

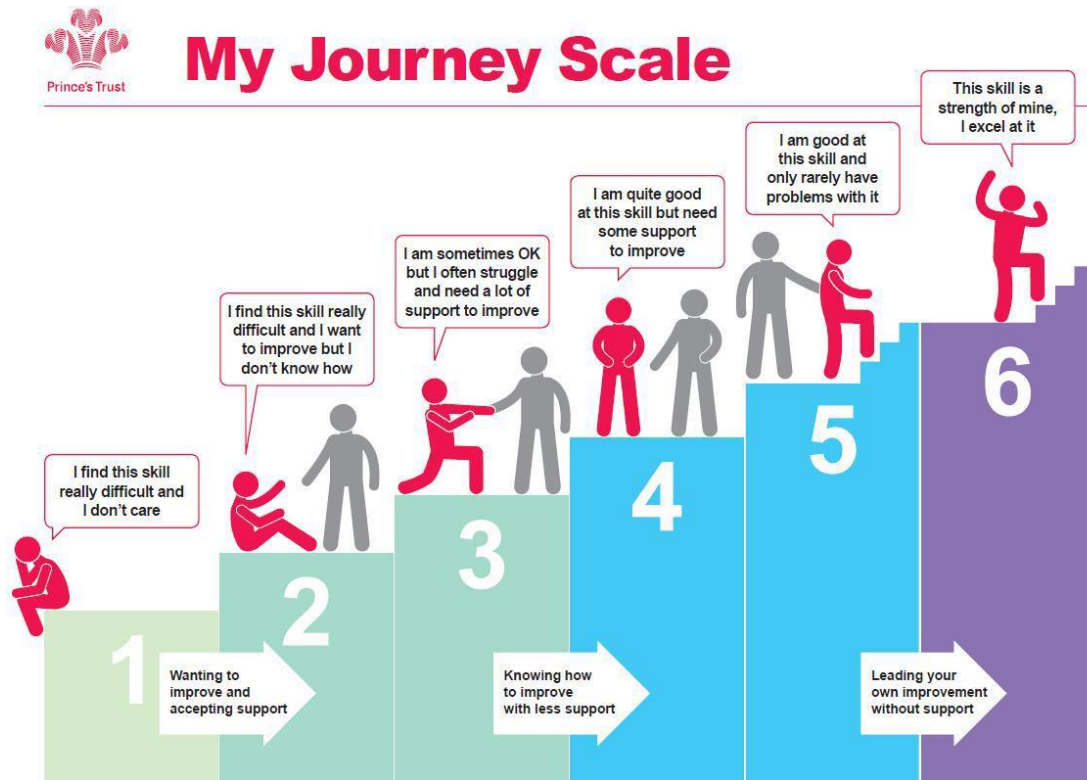
**Table 2: United Youth pilot outlines**

<p>A mentoring focused pilot delivered in partnership which operated in four separate areas in Belfast. The pilot supported participants to engage with opportunities in their community and included a European visit.</p>
<p>A pilot involving a range of development activities and delivered over three sites in NI and with young people in contact with the juvenile justice system.</p>
<p>The pilot focused on a model where the participants planned and administered a bursary programme for other young people to support local community and youth activities.</p>
<p>This pilot facilitated young people with past programmes experience to engage on a voluntary basis with participants to develop pilot content. A good relations trip within the UK featured.</p>
<p>This pilot involved a range of capacity building activities for young people including the opportunity to take part in a university course. Participants travelled within Europe.</p>
<p>A youth-led pilot which supported participants through a process of identifying their own development needs and pursuing learning opportunities according to their interests.</p>
<p>Based on the pilot provider's approach to building community relations through sport, the pilot enabled participants to become involved in developing their skills for leading activities across various sports focused initiatives</p>
<p>The pilot was aimed at young people with a visual impairment and included a variety of activities delivered on a largely residential basis at an outdoor activity centre, with support from pilot provider staff between residential events.</p>
<p>The pilot brought together a cohort of young people from rural areas to take part in activities ranging from personal development to community action activities, and from good relations to work experience tasters.</p>
<p>The pilot involved seven partner organisations offering a range of opportunities to</p>

young people across the partners' various areas of activity.
The pilot, in partnership with a university, engaged young people from marching bands in a range of development activities culminating in a musical performance. European visits featured.
This was a youth-led pilot which involved young people working in teams to identify content and organise pilot activities with appropriate support from staff. An overseas visit featured as part of the pilot journey.
The pilot was delivered over four sites in NI. Participants were involved in youth work projects in their respective localities and came together for regular cross-base activities.

(Two pilots were affected by the closure in January 2016 of one pilot provider organisation and its subsidiary which was also delivering a pilot. This led to the two pilots in question being managed by another pilot provider from February 2016, following a competitive process to appoint a managing agent. Participants' preference was for the two pilots to be completed as a single pilot. Information on the original two pilots and the new single pilot is included in this report according to its relevance and availability across the various areas considered for the evaluation.)

Figure 5: My Journey Scale (26)



<sup>26</sup> [My Journey Scale](#), Princes Trust