

Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee Policy Review 2010 – 2011

Learning at Work: The Role of Work Based Learning and Apprenticeships in Tackling NEET's

Draft Final Report

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1 Foreword from the Chairman of the Committee

On behalf of the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee I am delighted to publish this report. I would like to thank all those who participated in the process, for their time, effort and continued commitment to their chosen fields.



The importance of work and the role it plays in all our lives cannot be underestimated it gives a sense of purpose, it contributes to the economy and provides through the development of skills a career pathway. For young people leaving school there are a variety of directions to travel from the traditional academic routes to going straight into employment. However the recent economic downturn has put pressure on many of the traditional routes into employment and for young people leaving full time education it can be a very daunting prospect.

Throughout the evidence gathering for this review Members of the Committee have witnessed the importance of work to young people, the drive that many had to succeed and also the difficulties encountered in securing employment, training positions or apprenticeships within the City. Sunderland's Economic Masterplan recognises that the future of Sunderland lies in educated, enterprising and ambitious people with the skills to contribute to the city's economy and the region's labour market. Paramount to this will be the ability to provide young people with the skills required to play a part and contribute to current and developing industries both within Sunderland and the region.

The Committee visited schools, training centres and places of business as part of the evidence gathering process. It was good to see firsthand some of the excellent work being undertaken across the City, all with the same purpose of preparing and supporting young people to enter the world of work. In visiting schools it was positive to see how school staff looked to identify young people at the risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) at an early stage and some of the innovative intervention strategies being used to keep them engaging with the school. The importance of this cannot be underestimated as apprenticeships are seen by many young people as an ultimate goal, but with fierce competition for limited opportunities it is often only the most well balanced of individuals who are successful.

Finally I would like to thank my colleagues on the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee for their valuable input and contribution throughout the course of the policy review. I hope that the work and recommendations can help to address some of the issues that have been highlighted and can contribute, in some way, to helping our young people move to further education, training or employment.

Paul Stewart

Councillor Paul Stewart, Chair of the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee

2 Introduction

- 2.1 The Annual Scrutiny Conference was held at the Marriott Hotel on 20th May 2010. During the Scrutiny Café sessions a number of viable policy reviews were formulated for discussion by Members of the Committee. At its meeting on 7th June 2010, following discussions regarding the Work Programme, the Committee agreed to focus on the issue of NEETs and the role of work based learning and apprenticeships.

3 Aim of the Review

- 3.1 To investigate the issue of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) in Sunderland and the primary role of apprenticeships in providing work focused training for young people.

4 Terms of Reference

- 4.1 The title of the review was agreed as 'Learning at Work: The role of work based learning and apprenticeships in tackling NEETs' and its terms of reference were agreed as:

- (a) To understand the issues associated with being NEET in Sunderland;
- (b) To consider the interventions that reduce the number of young people who are at risk of becoming NEET including understanding the barriers and opportunities to retaining young people in post-16 education;
- (c) To investigate the role of apprenticeships in providing work based learning for young people including understanding the reasons behind the success or failure of schemes;
- (d) To engage with employers and young people across the city and region to determine the support available or that is potentially required to enable the development of relationships;
- (e) To consider the relationship between demand and supply of apprenticeship opportunities and gain a better understanding of the quantity and choices available for sustainable vocational opportunities;
- (f) To consider the nature of preventative services and the mechanisms that support transition for young people who are NEET and;
- (g) To look at examples of good practice from across the region and country in relation to the policy review.

- 4.2 Members agreed that as the review progressed, they may feel that the review should narrow its focus further in order to ensure that robust findings and recommendations are produced.

- 4.3 Members agreed to look particularly at the apprenticeships and other work based learning opportunities that were available for young people who were NEET or at the risk of becoming NEET.

5 Membership of the Committee

- 5.1 The membership of the Management Scrutiny Committee during the Municipal Year is outlined below:

Councillors Paul Stewart (Chair), Graham Hall (Vice-Chair), Richard Bell, Stephen Bonallie, Bob Francis, Doris MacKnight, Tom Martin, Robert Oliver, Dennis Richardson, Dorothy Trueman and Linda Williams.

Co-opted Members: Malcolm Frank, Christine Hutchinson, Rose Elliott, Marilyn Harrop, Suzanne Duncan, Howard Brown and Ken Morris.

6 Methods of Investigation

- 6.1 The approach to this work included a range of research methods namely:

- (a) Desktop research – review of relevant documentation including government documents such as The Audit Commissions ‘Against the Odds: Re-engaging young people in educations, employment or training’.
- (b) Interviews – with key individuals both internally and externally
- (b) Focus groups – with key individuals both internally and externally
- (c) Questionnaire
- (d) Presentations at committee
- (e) Video Diary Room
- (f) Site Visits
- (g) Expert Jury Event

- 6.2 All participants were assured that their individual comments would not be identified in the final report, ensuring that the fullest possible answers were given.

- 6.3 Interviews with the following personnel were carried out:

- (a) Elaine Murray and Tyler Moore – Gentoo Living
- (b) Gwyneth Bell – Precision Geomatics Limited
- (c) Neill Hall – Turbo Power Systems
- (d) Christine Robson – Sunderland & Houghton Le Spring Magistrates Courts
- (e) Joanne Mounter – Team Wearside
- (f) Angela Badsey-Doyle – Key Training
- (g) Derek Freeman – Milltech
- (h) Gillian Laws – Future Strategies.

- 6.4 A number of visits were conducted during the policy review to gather evidence and to witness some of the initiatives being undertaken with young people to develop their skills and provide them with opportunities within the working environment. These included:

- (a) Springboard
- (b) Sunderland ITeC
- (c) City of Sunderland College
- (d) Nissan
- (e) Red House Academy
- (f) Sandhill View School
- (g) Sunderland Connexions Service.

- 6.5 An expert Jury Event on 17th December 2010, where final evidence was presented to members of the committee by:
- (a) Beverley Scanlon – Children’s Services
 - (b) John Rawling – Deputy Director of HR and OD
 - (c) Suzanne Duncan – Vice-Principal City of Sunderland College
 - (d) John Wood - South Tyneside Manufacturing Forum
 - (e) Andrew Carton – Connexions Manager.
- 6.6 The Sunderland Connexions Service ran an interactive e-voting event giving young people the opportunity to answer a number of questions around their experiences in looking for work, training or further education. The results of this survey have helped to inform the final report and Appendix 1 of this report provides full details of the survey.
- 6.7 A ‘Big Brother’ style diary room event was also organised to allow young people to express their own thoughts, experiences and frustrations in relation to looking for employment, training or further education.
- 6.8 It should also be noted that many of the statements made are based on qualitative research i.e. interviews and focus groups. As many people as possible were interviewed in an attempt to gain a cross section of views, however it is inevitable from this type of research that some of the statements made may not be representative of everyone’s views. All statements in this report are made based on information received from more than one source, unless it is clarified in the text that it is an individual view. Opinions held by a small number of people may or may not be representative of others’ views but are worthy of consideration nevertheless.

7 Findings of the Review

Findings relate to the main themes raised during the committee's investigations and evidence gathering.

7.1 The National and Local Picture

Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

7.1.1 The term not in education, employment or training (NEET), was formally created by the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU 1999) in their report 'Bridging the Gap'. It refers to 16-18 year olds who, due to their NEET status, are at risk of not making the transition to education, training and employment.

7.1.2 The number of young people who are NEET peaked in the mid-1980's when youth unemployment was at its highest. The latest figures show that the proportion of the cohort who are NEET has remained broadly stable since 2003 (at around 10% \pm 1%). This is largely due to the increase in the proportion of 16-18 year olds in education and training being counter-balanced by a fall in the proportion of 16-18 year olds in employment. The overall effect is for the NEET rate to remain stable because around half of the drop in employment reflects a shift from young people being both in employment and education to being in education full-time.¹

7.1.3 Young people become NEET for a variety of reasons and they require different solutions to get them into work or learning. However recent research² has categorised NEETs into three distinct groups in terms of their attitudes to education and future employment and the likelihood of their re-engaging. These are:

Open to Learning (41%): typically young people who have made poor choices in terms of progression and are awaiting a start date for a more suitable option. These young people are likely to re-engage in the short to medium term and are more positive about their educational experiences and optimistic about future job prospects.

Undecided (22%): the smallest of the three groups, these young people are unable to make up their minds about what they want to do or are dissatisfied with available options. Young people from this category can often exhibit negative attitudes to school and the provision now available to them, as well as lacking the resilience or skills to access suitable opportunities.

Sustained (38%): almost the classic NEET group with young people exhibiting characteristics that include coming from deprived backgrounds, low educational attainment, no employment history and very negative experiences of school. These young people face multiple barriers to progressing into education, training or employment.

7.1.4 The NEET group is not uniform and contains young people with a diverse range of backgrounds and characteristics, including some well qualified young people who have found post-16 learning simply not meeting their particular needs. However some common features do emerge and research from the Office of National

¹ Department of Education Statistical Release 23rd November 2010

² Spielhofer, T., Benton, T., Evans, K., Featherstone, G., Golden, S., Nelson, J. and Smith, P. (2009). Increasing participation: understanding young people who do not participate in education or training at 16 or 17. NFER

Statistics has illustrated that among this diverse group that is NEET, persistent absentees are seven times more likely to be doing nothing aged 16 than those who have had regular school attendance. The NEET group also contains an estimated 20,000 teenage mothers, but the gender gap is widening with boys now more than twice as likely as girls to not be in education, employment or training.

Young People and EET: Facts and Figures – The National Perspective

7.1.5 Young people have historically experienced the highest rates of unemployment compared with other age groups.

7.1.6 More than one in five 16 to 24-year-olds are now out of work, after a rise of 66,000 to 965,000 without jobs, the highest figure since records began in 1992.

7.1.7 The UK unemployment rate is currently 7.9%, but for 16-24-year-olds it is 20.5%.

7.1.8 At the same time, the proportion of 16- to 18-year-old NEETs fell to a year-on-year low at 162,000. This is the equivalent of 8.5% of this age group. This has fallen dramatically since the same period in 2008 when 10.4% of this age group were NEET.

7.1.9 There are regional variations to the numbers of young people who are NEET and the numbers of NEETs vary across the country. Areas such as the South East, South West and London show numbers of approximately 5.5% to 6% compared with the North East where NEET levels are nearer 9%.

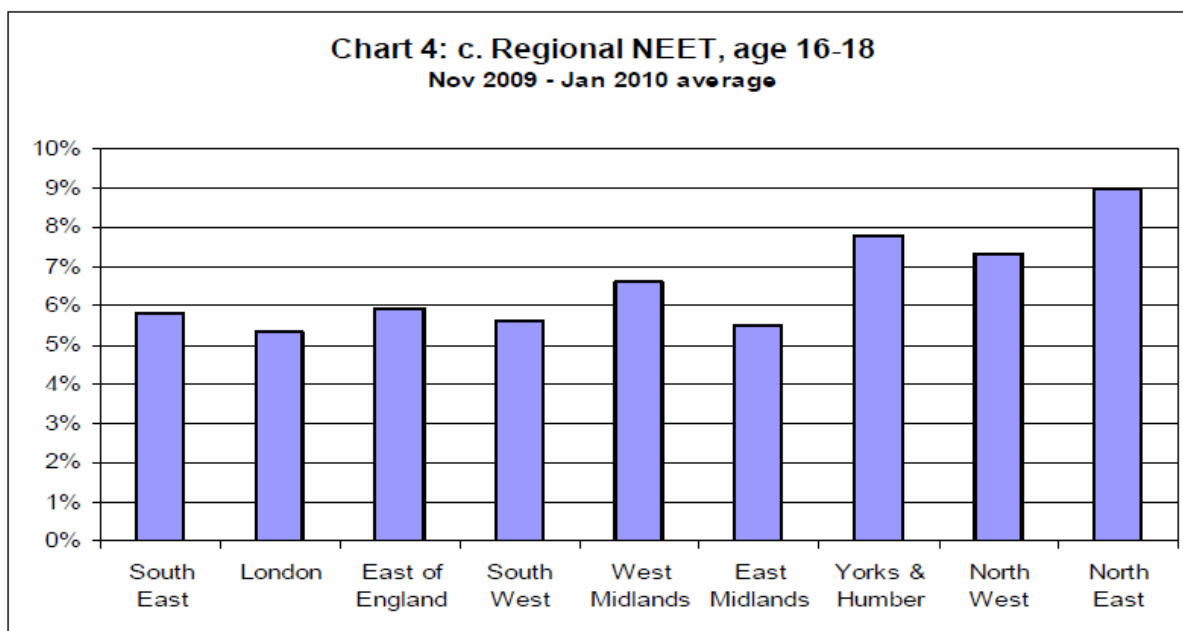


Figure 1: NEET figures by region from Nov 2009-Jan 2010
Source: Department of Education

7.1.10 In total, nearly 7 in 10 (68%) of 16 to 18-year-olds stayed in full-time education in 2009, compared with 64.7% in 2008, with the total number of 16 to 18-year-olds in education or training rising by 39,000 to 1.65m.

Young People and EET: Facts and Figures – The Local Perspective

7.1.11 The North East had the highest rate of 16 to 18 year olds who were NEET at 9.8% in 2008, which had declined slightly from 2007. Further to this Sunderland had the highest proportion of 16-18 year olds who were NEET in the North East in 2008 as well as being the second highest in the country. By January 2010 Sunderland had improved to the thirtieth highest.

7.1.12 The NEET group, in Sunderland like many other places, is very fluid with young people joining and leaving regularly. From November 2009 – January 2010 a total of 371 young people joined the NEET group with 754 young people leaving the same group.

7.1.13 NEET figures recorded a large fall in Sunderland between June 2009 and June 2010 from 13.4% to 9.2% which was in line with recorded figures through all Tyne and Wear districts in the same period.

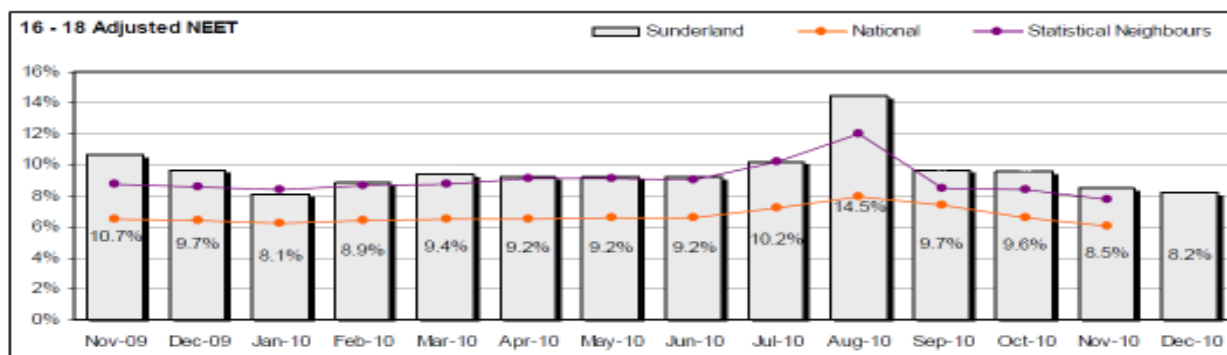


Figure 2: 16-18 Adjusted NEET figures with National and Statistical Neighbours
Source: Sunderland Connexions

7.1.14 Young people who attended a school in Sunderland and reached the statutory school leaving age in June 2010 were tracked through the Sunderland Connexions Service Activity Survey. The survey highlighted that of 3,615 young people in the survey 95.25% were in education, employment or training a rise of 3.03% on 2009 figures.

7.1.15 The Activity Survey also highlighted that 81.58% (2949) of young people were in full time education on 1st November 2010 compared with 2009 figures of 78.23% (2889) young people.

7.1.16 The table below shows the 16-18 NEET percentage adjusted to take into consideration the number that are not known, the number of NEET young people and the 16-18 population. The data is based on that recorded on Connexions Client Information System.

Ward	16-18 adjusted NEET %	No young people NEET	16-18 population
Washington South	3.7%	7	321
Fulwell	3.3%	14	419
St Chads	5.4%	16	298
Barnes	4.7%	17	363
St Peters	6.8%	21	310
Ryhope	5.3%	22	415
Millfield	7.8%	24	308
Washington West	7.2%	27	375
St Michaels	8.0%	28	352
Doxford	7.4%	28	378
Washington Central	7.0%	29	413
Shiney Row	6.8%	31	456
Houghton	8.4%	32	380
Washington East	7.4%	34	457
Copt Hill	9.2%	34	371
Washington North	8.2%	35	425
Hetton	9.5%	35	368
Sandhill	7.7%	36	466
Southwick	10.4%	37	356
Redhill	9.4%	38	404
Pallion	10.2%	38	374
Castle	9.3%	39	420
Silksworth	11.1%	41	371
St Annes	9.8%	48	490
Hendon	14.3%	60	420

Figure 3: 16-18 NEET November 2010 by Ward
Source: Sunderland Connexions

7.2 Pre-16 Compulsory Education

The Role of the School

- 7.2.1 School has a very important role to play in developing young people and helping towards maximising their life chances. It is at school where young people develop many of the skills required to progress in the working world from basic knowledge and skills to being able to interact socially. It is also compulsory education that often presents the biggest challenge to young people and for some it leads to uncertainty, apathy and ultimately dropping out of the education system.
- 7.2.2 Research indicates that non-attendance at school remains a considerable issue and regular absence can start from as early as age 12. Some of these young people have a negative attitude towards school which has proved to be an unsatisfactory experience at a formative stage of their lives, they are also at risk of dropping out due to their perceptions of school as authoritarian structures. This was supported by the committee's evidence gathering which highlighted key barriers for young people being their experiences pre-16 where they were often disengaged from education, had poor attendance and the household suffered from high levels and/or a history of worklessness. All of these can have a significant impact on a young person's opportunities post-16.
- 7.2.3 At the committee's expert jury event held in December it was identified that one of the key strengths in Sunderland was the 14-19 strategy which runs through Sunderland City Council's Children's Services Directorate and involves strong partnership links with schools, colleges and training providers. It was further noted

that Sunderland was currently looking at how it could broaden the 14-19 offer in the light of national thinking in this area.

- 7.2.4 Also a key theme that ran throughout the evidence gathering centred on the lack of qualifications young people had in literacy and numeracy which presented potential barriers to young people post-16. At a training provider focus group, held as part of the evidence gathering, it was highlighted that some of the young people who were presented to the training providers were not at the requisite ability levels to undertake an apprenticeship. The importance of life skills was also highlighted and how these could be reinforced in schools. It was identified that it was important to ensure that this was part of a young person's school experience, and clearly there were pockets of good provision in schools which worked effectively. However, it was expressed that this was not strategic across the city and could possibly be extended.
- 7.2.5 The review also noted that Connexions had a key role, through its Personal Advisors, to provide every young person with the opportunity to have a careers guidance interview. The service worked closely with Headteachers, school staff, training providers, colleges and employers to support young people in their transition.

Sandhill View School

- 7.2.6 Members visited Sandhill View School to see the work being done to encourage those students who had become disengaged to reengage with the school.
- 7.2.7 Schools can often be seen as being too inflexible when there is scope to be more creative and encourage young people to re-engage. Sandhill View School has done just this by initiating the use of COPE (Certificate of Personal Effectiveness) qualifications, which are a nationally recognised qualification outcome of the ASDAN programmes. The qualifications offer imaginative ways of accrediting young people's activities. They promote, and allow schools to record, a wide range of personal qualities, abilities and achievements of young people, as well as introducing them to new activities and challenges. The programme was based around improving attendance, personal development and getting students motivated.
- 7.2.8 Members raised the issue with the Vocational and Inclusion Coordinator of the school around vocational qualifications v's academic qualifications and it was noted that if some of the students at Sandhill were not undertaking vocational courses they would not be at school. The cohort that the Coordinator was teaching had very personalised timetables which were created to ensure pupils continued engagement with school.
- 7.2.9 Sandhill View School also recognised the importance that outside agencies can play in young people's education and development, by tackling in a more coordinated and structured way the characteristics that can lead young people to become NEET. With this in mind Members were informed that there were a number of outside partners who helped to deliver the programme in the school. Also a number of local businesses were engaged with the school in providing work experience for the students.

Case Study: LM an ex-pupil of Sandhill View School

LM joined Sandhill View School in 2005 and throughout years 7, 8 & 9 LM believed he would not make it through school and was in danger of dropping out. He was introduced to the Vocational and Inclusion Coordinator and the COPE programme and this gave him a real boost.

Following working with the school and the COPE programme gave LM the confidence and experience to apply for a job as a youth worker which he was successful in gaining and now works within the school as part of the A690 project.

The change in LM came about through the provision of different options and different ways of learning which led to dramatic changes.

7.2.10 The school has an important ethos in that everyone is included and nothing breeds motivation like success. Although it should be noted that students don't all succeed in the same way. The alternative curriculum is an attraction to some pupils and some in fact self refer to the program. Due to the modular nature of the programme it was identified as being very flexible.

7.2.11 Year 10 & 11 pupils were set on their transitional pathway through a variety of techniques. The school uses Connexions, colleges and universities to provide valuable information to pupils from an early stage. The school engages with its pupils and looks to guide students into the pathways that will help with their likely futures. The school informed members that it was important that students felt in control of their own learning.

Red House Academy

7.2.12 The Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee also visited Red House Academy, another school that had recognised the importance of a variety of approaches to help keep students engaged and from becoming NEET.

7.2.13 Red House Academy had a rolling 6 week programme of working with young people and the surrounding local community. The school was conscious to ensure there was active engagement with the local estate and to this end worked with community police, parents and young people to develop an extended relationship between school and community. The school acknowledged that they had disaffected students whose parents were not interested in education and this had been difficult for the school to combat. However, the school continues to breakdown barriers within the community by encouraging parents to attend coffee mornings, child care courses, zumba classes, family cooking and healthy eating. The school had also recently launched a community choir. It was noted that many parents were already influenced by their own experiences of attending the 'old' Hylton Red House School and this in itself could create a barrier.

7.2.14 The unofficial motto for the school was 'no invisible children'. To this aim the school operated a system of 'learning guides' who were responsible for between 6-10 pupils. The purpose being that every child within the school had a named person who they could go to for help, advice and guidance. All pupils were monitored on a rolling 6-weekly cycle through a standardised assessment. This data is analysed to determine if pupils were hitting their targets, identify gaps in learning and to traffic light pupils (red, amber, green). Pupils are provided with

additional support and/or help if required. The school values the importance of identifying children's needs and the impact this can have on performance.

7.2.15 What young people do outside school matters. Research shows that the out of school activities young people take part in have an important influence on their life chances. The benefits of participating in structured positive activities include; increased confidence, learning new skills and feeling more confident about asking for help and information³. In relation to this Red House Academy was trialling 'compulsory enrichment clubs' such as war games, falconry, child care etc. The clubs comprised mixed year and ability students and provided another environment for pupils to learn in.

7.2.16 Red House Academy identified potential NEETs as early as year 7. During Key Stage(KS) 3 pupils are monitored carefully with an emphasis on skills development. The school has a bespoke software programme which logs this development. From KS3 – KS4 there was an alternative curriculum option which takes a more vocational route for identified students.

7.2.17 Year 10 pupils have the opportunity for work experience. The school will support pupils by taking them to their work experience as well as organising pre-trips to employers all with the aim of making students comfortable within a placement. Red House will also provide work experience, if possible, within the school if students are reluctant to travel. In relation to the opportunities available for work experience for students it was noted that all students are encouraged to find their own placements and everyone is accommodated.

7.2.18 The table below shows the initial destination of the Academy's 2009 Year 11 leavers.

Full Time Education	92
Work Based Learning	12
Apprenticeship	4
Active in Labour Market	6
Not Active	2
Other	5

Figure 4: Red House Academy 2009 Year 11 Leavers (121 in total)
Source: Red House Academy

Schools Bill: The Importance of Teaching

7.2.19 A Department for Education Bill 'The Importance of Teaching' published on 24 November 2010, and now in its second reading, sets out the policy framework for a Bill intended to be brought before Parliament early in 2011. The Bill focuses on teaching and workforce issues and also broadly outlines future regulatory arrangements.

7.2.20 The Bill provides a number of important changes which will have a direct impact on much of the evidence gathered during the policy review. By 2013 the age to which young people will be expected to participate in education will rise to 17, and by 2015 it will rise again to 18. This will have a significant impact as currently around 68% of the UK's 16-18-year-olds remain in full-time education, and a further 15% receive some form of training.

³ Improvement and Development Agency (2010). Supporting ambition in our young people. Local Government Association

7.2.21 Through the Bill and subsequent legislation schools will also be encouraged to offer a broad set of academic subjects up to age 16 by the introduction of the new English Baccalaureate, which will focus solely on GCSE's. No decisions have yet been made on how to measure vocational education in schools alongside the English Baccalaureate. Professor Alison Wolf has recently undertaken a review of the role and value of vocational education on behalf of the Government and this is explored in detail below.

7.2.22 It is worth noting at this point the performance of Sunderland Schools in relation to academic improvement. The Government's gold standard measure requires sixteen year olds to achieve at least five GCSEs or equivalent at grade A*-C including at least grade C in both GCSE English and maths. Sunderland's results in 2010 were the highest ever achieved and also the highest year on year improvement since the measure was introduced. Sunderland's 5+ A*-C including English and Maths had improved from 45.1% to 52.6%, 2009 – 10, representing a 7.5% point improvement this year and an 18% point improvement over five years. The gap to the national average had been closed, continuing an improving trend over a 5 year period.

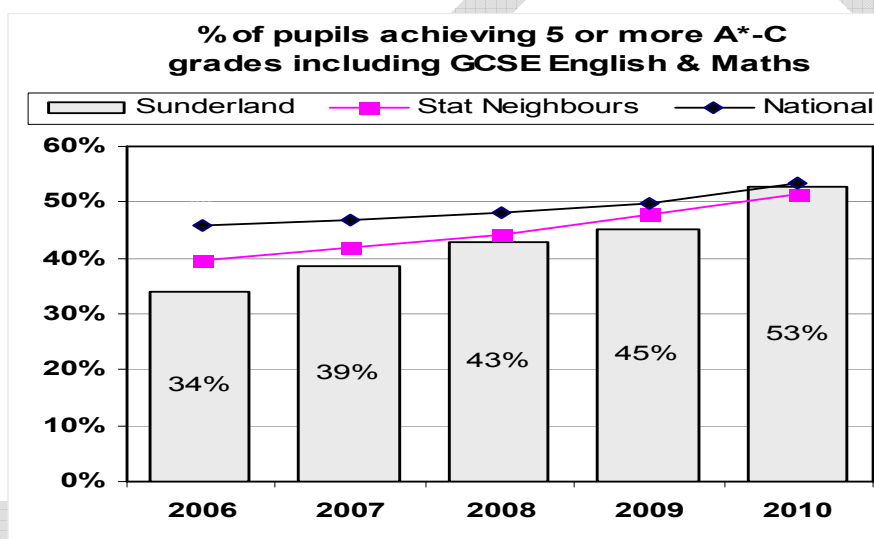


Figure 5: National and Regional statistical comparison with Sunderland Schools
Source: Children Services

The Wolf Report - Review of Vocational Education

7.2.23 The review conducted by economist Professor Alison Wolf was published on 3rd March 2011 and provides a comprehensive review of vocational education. The review underlines that too many young people are undertaking vocational courses which boost league tables but do not lead to university or employment. The review also recommends that all pupils should study a core of academic subjects until they are 16, as well as calling for changes to the school league tables so some vocational qualifications are not counted. Currently, some qualifications count for the equivalent of four GCSEs.

7.2.24 The report does recognise that vocational education includes, as it always has, courses and programmes which teach important and valuable skills to a very high standard. It can offer a direct route into higher education which has been followed by hundreds of thousands of young people; and apprenticeships which are massively over-subscribed. Conventional academic study encompasses only part of what the labour market values and demands: vocational education can offer

different content, different skills, different forms of teaching. Good vocational programmes are, therefore, respected, valuable and an important part of educational provision⁴.

7.2.25 The review however reports that many 16 and 17 year olds move in and out of education and short-term employment. They are moving between the two in an attempt to find either a course which offers a real chance for progress, or a permanent job, and are finding neither. The staple offer for between a quarter and a third of the post-16 cohort, according to the Wolf Report, is a diet of low-level vocational qualifications, most of which have little to no labour market value. Alarming the review estimates that at least 350,000 of 16-19 year olds get little or no benefit from the post-16 education system.

7.2.26 The Wolf Report also recognises, as our own review highlights, that English and Maths GCSE (at grades A*-C) were fundamental to young people's employment and education prospects. Yet less than 50% of students have both at the end of Key Stage 4 (age 15/16); and at age 18 the figure is still below 50%. Only 4% of the cohort achieved this key credential during their 16-18 education. The result is that many of England's 14-19 year olds do not, at present, progress successfully into either secure employment or higher-level education and training. Many of them leave education without the skills that would enable them to progress at a later date.

7.2.27 The report also states that children should study mainly academic subjects until they are 16 and that if they do not get a good GCSE in English and Maths by that age, they should be made to continue with those subjects. There was also a desire for more high-quality apprenticeships for young people aged from 16 to 18. The report and Professor Wolf argue that employers should be part-subsidised to offer such apprenticeships, if they offer wider training. The report also argues that it should be made easier for teachers from further education colleges to teach in schools.

7.3 Post-16 Education

The Opportunities for post-16 Education

7.3.1 Leaving school for some is the perceived end of education and the beginning of a life of work, but the harsh realities of the labour market mean many young people need to consider further education or training options post-16. There are many opportunities for post-16 learners through a choice of different types of institution providing education and training including further education in school sixth forms in the 3 voluntary aided secondary schools and sixth form colleges in partnership with City of Sunderland College. In Sunderland, it was identified at the Expert Jury Day that, there is a good mix of provision with 6th forms and colleges providing a strong basis for post-16 education.

7.3.2 This is highlighted by the scrutiny committee's visit to the City of Sunderland College that provides courses at every level for any school leaver including A-levels and BTEC Nationals. The college has four sixth form centres as well as a specialist campus for Visual and Performing Arts Courses at Shiney Row and the Hylton Skills Campus for vocational skills including catering and motor vehicle maintenance.

⁴ Professor Alison Wolf (2011). Review of Vocational Education. Department of Education

- 7.3.3 The committee visited Hylton Skills Campus which provides school leavers with the opportunity to train for careers in a number of occupations including catering, bricklaying, construction management, plumbing and joinery. Members noted that the college currently had around 120 full time students on construction courses. It was also seen that the college was tapping into the emerging renewable energies market with a number of courses for the up-skilling of current trades and the development of courses for 16-18-year-olds.
- 7.3.5 The college also provides an on-site nursery with heavily subsidised childcare places for college students. This acted as an enabler for students who may have childcare commitments to still take up or continue their own education or training.



Figure 6: Plastering training course at Hylton Skills Campus

The Barriers to post-16 Education

- 7.3.6 One of the key barriers for some young people was their experiences pre-16 where they were often disengaged from education, had poor attendance records and the household suffered from high levels and/or a history of worklessness. All of these have a significant impact on a young person's opportunities post-16. Although equally the committee had seen how some secondary schools were looking to address some of these issues with innovative approaches.
- 7.3.7 There are also issues with a lack of qualifications around literacy, numeracy and life skills all of which present potential barriers to young people post-16. This has the potential to reduce a young person's options post-16 or force them down alternative routes largely due to a lack of qualifications or skills to pursue.
- 7.3.8 The Expert Jury Day highlighted the plethora of qualifications and routes that young people could take when moving to post-16 education. However, it was identified that it was very much about making the right choices, particularly in the current changing climate. Recent Research had also borne this out stating that one of the

most common barriers to young people participating in post-16 education was a lack of knowledge of all the options available to them⁵.

- 7.3.9 Those young people who are NEET are more prone to experience at least one barrier in deciding what to do at the end of year 11. The main barriers identified often relate to courses being unavailable in their area and around lack of money to undertake post-16 education.
- 7.3.10 The issue of courses being unavailable may increase as a potential barrier with institutions like Sunderland City College already seeing funding cuts of £2.8million and the resultant loss of 44 positions within the college. The college like many similar organisations was now looking at how it delivers services, staffing and the curriculum model. Currently the college offers provision across the city and through financial pressures it will need to look to see if this can continue in the future.
- 7.3.11 The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), a scheme providing young people from low income families with a weekly allowance to continue in education, has provided financial assistance with travel, books and equipment for young people. The withdrawal of this EMA funding was also highlighted as a concern. Students on work based learning courses will no longer be able to claim EMA from September 2011. This is a big issue for the City of Sunderland College with around 75% of learners currently eligible for this grant, and for many it is a necessity that provides travel costs to and from their place of learning. This will also have a significant impact on those young people who are vulnerable and at risk of returning to the NEET category.
- 7.3.12 The potential reduction in course availability could see the need for young people to travel further to access particular courses for their own career development. The Expert Jury Day highlighted transport as a major factor and it was perhaps the cost of public transport rather than availability that was the issue for young people. If taking into account the removal of EMA it can only make those decisions that much harder and present a far greater barrier than before. An e-voting survey conducted by the Sunderland Connexions Service, on behalf of the scrutiny committee, also supported this in that of those young people surveyed 31% left their last education, employment or training position due to lack of money or it involved too much travel.

7.4 The Role of Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning

What is an Apprenticeship?

- 7.4.1 An apprenticeship provides an opportunity to earn a wage and learn job specific skills working alongside experienced staff. An apprenticeship would typically involve off the job training, usually on a day release basis with the training working towards nationally recognised qualifications. Apprenticeships are available to anyone living in England, over the age of 16 and not in full-time education.
- 7.4.2 There are three levels of Apprenticeship available for those aged 16 and over:

- (a) Apprenticeships (once completed it is equivalent to five good GCSE passes)

⁵ Spielhofer, T., Golden, S., Evans, K., Marshall, H., Mundy, E., Pomati, M. and Styles, B. (2008). Barriers to participation in education and training. NFER

Apprentices work towards work-based learning qualifications such as an NVQ Level 2, Key Skills and, in some cases, a relevant knowledge-based qualification such as a BTEC.

These provide the skills needed for a chosen career and allow entry to an Advanced Apprenticeship.

- (b) Advanced Apprenticeships (once completed it is equivalent to two A-level passes)
Advanced apprentices work towards work-based learning qualifications such as NVQ Level 3, Key Skills and, in most cases, a relevant knowledge based certificate such as a BTEC.

To start this programme, candidates should ideally hold five GCSEs (grade C or above) or have completed an Apprenticeship.

- (c) Higher Apprenticeships
Higher Apprenticeships work towards work-based learning qualifications such as NVQ Level 4 and, in some cases, a knowledge-based qualification such as a Foundation degree.

- 7.4.3 New measures are to be introduced to guarantee the quality of the Government's Apprenticeship programme which aims to ensure every apprenticeship directly meets the needs of employers and learners. The Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England state that all apprenticeships will deliver high quality, nationally-recognised qualifications relevant to the skill, trade or occupation of the learner and employer. In addition all apprenticeships will offer individuals appropriate training to achieve a good standard of literacy and numeracy (and ICT where relevant to the skill, trade or occupation), and every apprentice will receive at least 280 hours of guided learning per year.

The Funding Issue

- 7.4.4 From 1st October 2010 all apprentices aged 16 to 19 and those aged 19 and over in their first year must receive a minimum of £2.50 an hour. Once they reach the age of 19 and have completed their first year their employer must pay them the full national minimum wage for their age, £4.92 per hour for 18-20 year olds, and £5.93 per hour for those over the age of 21. Apprentices also receive at least 20 days paid holiday per year as well as bank holidays.
- 7.4.5 The majority of apprentices have employment status, however, there were a number of non-employed programme led apprentices. Their programmes were managed by training providers and they are on placement with an employer. These apprentices received an allowance of £95 per week. Programme led apprenticeships were due to end on 31 March 2011. It is not yet known whether they will be replaced with a similar format. Members also noted that funding for the Train to Gain scheme was to come to an end.
- 7.4.6 In Sunderland, Springboard Hub is funded by the Working Neighbourhood Fund to provide supported programme led apprenticeships for young people aged 17 and 18. Young people are employed by Springboard and placed with an employer at no cost to that employer. They are with the project until they complete their NVQ level 2. This funding ends on 31 March 2011.

- 7.4.7 The National Apprenticeship Service will contribute to the costs of the training depending on the age of the apprentice at a rate of 100% for 16-18 year olds and 50% for 19-24 year olds. It is expected that the employer rather than the training provider will pay the other 50% of the costs, although in practice it is rare that employers are required to cover that cost. The Coalition Government has announced the intention to tighten up on this arrangement of requiring employers to contribute.
- 7.4.8 Apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds are funded by the Department of Education and for over 19s by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills. The Comprehensive Spending Review announced an increase of 50% in apprenticeship funding with a view to creating 75,000 new apprentices a year by 2014 and extending the opportunities to all ages. The 2011 Budget announced that the Government would fund an additional 80,000 work experience places for young people, ensuring up to 100,000 places would be available over the next two years. The Budget also set out funding of £180 million for up to 50,000 additional apprenticeship places over the next four years. 40,000 places will provide additional capacity to support young unemployed people, in particular through progression from the work experience programme. To address the specific barriers faced by Small Medium Enterprises in accessing apprenticeships, the Government will support business consortia to set up and maintain advanced and higher apprenticeships schemes, supported by grants, creating a further 10,000 apprenticeships.

The Training Providers

- 7.4.9 There are a number of training providers across Sunderland (Appendix 2 provides a list of the major providers) who are either locally, regionally or nationally based and offer a number of courses, training opportunities and placements for young people across the city. Members met with a number of these providers who acknowledged that as a training provider they had little influence over many of the factors that can contribute to young people being NEET. However, providers did acknowledge some of the principle characteristics associated with long-term NEETs included family issues, financial stability, learning ability and keeping track of young people. A lot of young people drift in and out of the NEET category but those identified as 'hardcore' NEETs were difficult to access. Many were targeted through the Connexions service and the community work they undertake, and the success of this was unknown. Providers highlighted that many of the young people came from families with 2nd and 3rd generation engrained issues, and it was difficult to raise these young people's aspirations.
- 7.4.10 It was noted that providers had some concerns that some young people were leaving school unprepared for the world of work. Schools were seen as more academically driven through exam results. Providers felt that schools needed to be encouraged to develop support around how 'working works' and to prepare young people for what awaits them beyond the school gates.
- 7.4.11 It was identified by providers that there was a great deal of difference between the perception of work and actual work for young people. It was interesting to note that employers dealing with learners were looking for the same package regardless, so it was often a case of adult workers v's 16-17 year-old workers and this could often put younger people at a disadvantage.

- 7.4.12 It was also noted by Members that many of the young people coming onto providers programmes had unrealistic aspirations; and it was an important aspect that young people were realistic.
- 7.4.13 Apart from the LSC funding received by all apprenticeship providers, a substantial 57 per cent of providers reported apprenticeship funding from employers, just 9 per cent cite learner funding, and 8 per cent funding from other government bodies. Most providers stated they did not ask the employers for a contribution towards the fees for above 19 year old apprenticeship learners. The main reasons for this were: difficult to explain to employers why they do not have to pay for an 18 year old but have to pay for a 19 year old; the feeling that employers already contributed significantly to the training; and more infrequently competition and an unwillingness to charge when competitors did not, for fear of losing market share. Some providers have had to turn over-19 year old learners away as employers have not been willing to provide the contribution.
- 7.4.14 Again providers returned to the school environment and expressed their concerns over the lack of work experience provided during the later school years. Most schools offered a one week work experience opportunity for young people, with the rest of the time dominated by academic studies. A big problem cited by providers was that a majority of young people were not conditioned into work experience and therefore did not have a realistic idea of what they wanted to do upon leaving school.
- 7.4.15 It was interesting to note through the focus group, held with training providers, that they identified Sunderland as amongst the worst 'sell' areas for apprenticeships in the North East with employers. Training providers simply found it difficult to engage with some employers in Sunderland and it was even difficult for providers to get through the door of many companies to show what they could offer. This, compounded, by the fact that many young people did not want to travel even small distances due in part to the very territorial nature of Sunderland's young people, made getting placements in Sunderland very difficult. The attitude of employers and employees in Newcastle was noted as generally better by the training providers. This highlights the importance of the Economic Masterplan and its strategic aim of an inclusive economy for all ages through engaging neighbourhoods in the new economy, developing city enterprise, taking a strategic approach to raising skills and attracting and retaining young people in the city.
- 7.4.16 The Economic Masterplan acknowledges that the city's future depends on educated, enterprising and ambitious people with the skills to contribute to the city's economy and the region's labour market. The Skills Strategy will establish processes and interventions that, when delivered, will provide children, young people and adults with the skills required to support the growth and development of current and prospective industries. Training will cover skills ranging from green construction techniques to engineering and healthcare including a focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects in the city's learning institutions. It will also provide a basis to develop a curriculum that gives people the skills to make themselves employable and supports them as they move on to higher paid work.
- 7.4.17 It was also highlighted that both the Bridges and Galleries management prohibited the training providers from marketing in their centres, which was a

major barrier for providing information on the services and courses available. There appeared to be some confusion, as both The Galleries and Bridges shopping centres permitted marketing by such companies, however, this was on a commercial basis conducted through an external company and only registered charities were able to market for free in the respective centres.

- 7.4.18 Performance issues were important to providers and it was noted that perhaps apprenticeships were not the right process to help tackle the NEET issue. Some providers had accepted young people onto apprenticeships who would not normally have made it anywhere else. However, it was still important that performance did not suffer as there was the potential to lose future business. This brought to the fore the whole 'moral' issue around the process. There was often a fine balancing act between accepting young people onto courses and not accepting. The danger of accepting young people who could potentially drop out and affect performance indicators, against not accepting young people and potentially limiting their options to very little. Training Providers also saw different types of NEETs; those that were above C average academically and those that were below C average, the options for the two groups differing greatly. These performance issues are borne out by in-depth research from the Learning and Skills Council that has shown that training providers place a great level of importance on learner demand, which is having demand from the right learners with prior qualifications, a good aptitude and commitment⁶.
- 7.4.19 Providers also noted that many older 16 year olds and early 17 year olds are far more successful on courses than early 'straight from school' 16 year olds. This, they felt, was largely down to young people having learned from their own experiences of life, looking for work and training for work.
- 7.4.20 Training providers suggested that a closer link with Connexions and the sharing of information, between work based learning providers, would help to identify and target those groups most at risk of becoming NEET or staying NEET. It would also help to provide a more seamless service between the various organisations. It was noted that some local authorities were already providing Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) to providers. Training providers reported that the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) had seen very little success, and that the Connexions service was much more successful.
- 7.4.21 The Committee also visited Sunderland ITeC, part of Sunderland City Council, which delivers apprenticeship training. ITeC delivers employed status apprenticeships; this means that all young people on apprenticeships were employed as such by employers across the city. ITeC, like many training providers, faced issues around funding arrangements with many streams being discontinued including Working Neighbourhood Funding, Train to Gain and European Social Funding. This could lead to a potential loss or reduction in current provision. Growth sectors identified by ITeC in terms of apprenticeships were in engineering while ICT/admin apprenticeships were acknowledged as difficult in attaining in the current climate. ITeC worked closely with employers to ensure apprenticeships were worthwhile for both employer and employee and that there was a real opportunity for a job at the end of the apprenticeship course.

⁶ Experian Public Sector (2009). Apprenticeships: Understanding the Provider Base. Learning and Skills Council

Supply and Demand of Apprenticeships

7.4.22 In Sunderland between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010 there were a total of 992 starters to apprenticeships, which represents 35% of the overall total in Tyne and Wear. The young people in Sunderland participated in apprenticeships in a number of different occupational areas as can be seen in the table below. This shows that most opportunities for apprenticeships are in clerical and secretarial, closely followed by skilled trades and skilled construction trades, this is similar across Tyne and Wear.

Skill Type if known	Advanced Apprenticeship	Apprenticeship	Total
Skill Type not known / recorded	68	217	285
Clerical and Secretarial	49	145	194
Other Skilled Trades	19	71	90
Skilled Construction Trades	7	72	79
Childcare	1	69	70
Sales Occupations	11	48	59
Hairdressing	6	42	48
Skilled Engineering Trades	33	12	45
Vehicle Trades	8	27	35
Health Care	5	29	34
Catering Occupations	1	14	15
Other Elementary Occupations	1	11	12
Electric/Electronic Trades	4	2	6
Agriculture/Forestry/Fisheries	0	6	6
Personal/Protective Services	1	3	4
Other Personal Services	0	3	3
Labourer & Other Unskilled Ind. Work	0	2	2
Metal Forming	2	0	2
Managerial & Professional	0	1	1
Plant & Machine Operatives	0	1	1
Travel Attendants	0	1	1
Grand Total	148	559	707

Figure 7: Skill Type of Apprenticeships in Sunderland
Source: Sunderland Connexions

7.4.23 As can be seen there is an appetite for apprenticeships, and this was confirmed at the Expert Jury Day where it was noted that with more young people than apprenticeships, and the removal of programme-led apprenticeships, the situation was becoming even more demand hungry. The e-voting survey conducted by the Sunderland Connexions Service, also supported this in that of those young people surveyed 50% felt there were not enough apprenticeship opportunities in Sunderland, while only 25% thought there were sufficient.

7.4.24 Sunderland City College reported similar experiences with demand outstripping supply. It was further highlighted that over the past 18 months for every apprenticeship position offered by the College there had been between 10 and 100 applications. Young people view apprenticeships as a very attractive proposition, however, it must be remembered that apprenticeships are very elite. Young people think that they will just walk into an apprenticeship, but in reality it is the most rounded of individuals who will be successful.

7.4.25 The Committee also acknowledged that it was certain occupations, including motor vehicles and construction, that were very popular with young people. It was also

seen as a complicated area with many young people not ready to move into an apprenticeship and the supported apprenticeship programme run by Springboard had helped to develop key skills in young people wishing to make that transition. The higher level apprenticeship programmes often struggled to fill positions solely on the demands of the programme and the requirements expected of young people.

7.4.26 There was no doubt that the proposed increase in contributions expected from employers would slow things down as it becomes more of an economic issue. It was suggested during the evidence gathering that even many of the big employers would potentially decrease or limit the numbers of apprentices that they employ.

7.5 Employers and Young People

The Employer Perspective

7.5.1 Employers are perhaps the most important part of the whole apprenticeship equation, for without their willingness to invest and develop in their own workforces there would be limited opportunities for young people to either begin work, or develop in a working environment. At the Expert Jury Day the importance of getting the message out to employers of the good economic and social sense in developing young people through an apprenticeship programme was highlighted. Young people can bring good ideas, drive, and initiatives and could ultimately change the way a company operated. There was an important message to convey that apprenticeships were not necessarily a drain on resources and employers can get far more back than they perhaps initially perceived. It was identified that there was a real need to get this positive message about apprenticeships 'out there' to local employers and businesses.

7.5.2 This message was echoed by a number of employers that the committee contacted, with some companies fully committed to taking on trainees, providing they felt comfortable that the trainees would develop the skills that would be useful to the company in the future. However employers also fully acknowledged the limited number of entry level opportunities within local businesses for young people due to the effects of the recent recession.

7.5.3 As with the some training providers, the employers highlighted their concerns about the educational standard of young people leaving school coupled with their lack of preparation and knowledge of working in the commercial world.

7.5.4 However it was not all doom and gloom because employers have recognised that when taking young people into the organisation, it was wonderful to see their confidence grow as they developed and matured through the training and working opportunities afforded them within the organisation. Employers stated that overall they had many more successes than failures when taking on young people and felt that on the job training enhanced their future prospects as well as the wealth of Sunderland, the region and ultimately the country.

7.5.5 City of Sunderland College is also promoting the benefits of apprenticeships through employer breakfast briefings which showcase the success and merits of apprentices in the workplace. Employers were invited along before the start of the working day to see the potential of apprentices for their workforces.

7.5.6 Sunderland City Council has recognised the benefits of apprenticeships and as one of the largest employers within the city also understands the social importance of

providing opportunities for young people. Currently the council has 75 apprentices in post with 111 people having completed apprenticeships over the last 3 years, of which 83 ended up with a permanent position within the Council. By this promotion of apprentices within the Council some services have seen real opportunities around restructuring and service re-design. The Streetscene service is a good example of this as 50 new apprenticeships are to be created in 2011. In relation to the sustainability of so many apprentices in one service it was noted that the age profile of the Streetscene staff could see problems over the next few years as many of them retire. It was also noted that ultimately all apprenticeships were fixed term contracts with no guarantees of employment at the end of them.

- 7.5.7 When recruiting young people, Sunderland City Council not only looked at the conventional aspects such as qualifications, the Council also conducts an analysis to determine the qualifications and qualities needed to fulfil any advertised role. It was highlighted that it was important to change the attitude of families where worklessness was inter-generational.
- 7.5.8 Nissan, the other major employer within the City, also recognised the importance of recruiting, training and developing their future workforces. Nissan operate a number of trainee schemes and programmes including in administration, manufacturing, maintenance and production supervisors. Nissan currently had 279 trainees on the various schemes operated and it was clear when visiting the company the importance placed on building their own workforce for the future. The company also had placements for graduates and students. Interestingly Nissan also highlighted that their biggest issue with young trainees was around their work ethic and the pace of work required by the company.
- 7.5.9 Another major employer that the committee had spoken with was Gentoo who currently have 33 apprentices in posts across the trade arms of their organisation. Gentoo apprentices vary in age from 17-43 and all vacancies attracted a high calibre and volume of applicants. It was noted that all apprentices were given full-time employment at the successful completion of their apprenticeship.
- 7.5.10 Gentoo also delivered the Supported Apprenticeship Programme through the Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF) "Assisting People to Work: Specialised Provision" and in partnership with Connexions and Springboard. The hub programme looked at employability training for over 200 NEET young people and targeted learners with insufficient skills, qualifications or experience. Gentoo supported 10 apprentices over a 2 year period and the programme helped young people grow and develop, so far 8 have joined Gentoo Living and the remaining 2 are still in post, with the organisation looking for opportunities for them.
- 7.5.11 Gentoo acknowledged that the programme had not been without its difficulties and on average it had cost £46,000 per young person. This cost included a work based mentor, programme manager and support workers. Gentoo were keen to explain that they had adapted the programme to suit the needs of the individual, this was particularly important when dealing with young people who were NEET and their often complex social and domestic issues.

Case Study: Gentoo Living

Gentoo employed one young person who suffered from domestic violence in their home life. Gentoo recognised that a 5 day apprenticeship programme would be unsuitable for this person, so working together through a support worker a solution was agreed that was acceptable by both employer and employee.

The organisation was able to signpost the young person to organisations who could help with their personal situation and Gentoo also provided support including a reduction to their working week. This helped the individual and produced outcomes and success, but this was only through individually facilitated support and guidance.

- 7.5.12 Throughout the review Members of the Committee had heard about how some young people were unprepared for the world of work. Gentoo offer a 2 year day release programme for local secondary school pupils studying a BTEC Higher in Construction. Each young person has a dedicated work mentor and the course is linked to the traditional apprenticeship programme. Currently 52 pupils from Farrington School and Sandhill View School have participated since September 2007 with a 100% pass rate. This no doubt provided these young people with an experience of work and just what exactly was required in a working environment, as well as increasing those young people's potential for employability.
- 7.5.13 Gentoo explained that the current economic climate was putting a number of these initiatives in jeopardy. The spending review, government cuts and loss of funding streams all had potentially detrimental effects on such projects and schemes. Gentoo were also keen to explain that in looking for apprentices they looked for qualities like determination, motivation, reliability and eagerness rather than qualifications and this was particularly relevant when working with the NEET group.
- 7.5.14 A lot of the employers also recognised the sterling work done by local service providers including Sunderland ITeC, MillTech, Springboard and the Connexions Service. Employers felt that providers like these offered practical experiences for those students who were on placement with employers, and an important service in addressing the NEET issue. Special mention was also given to the vocational provision provided through Sunderland City Council at the Pallion and Harraton Centres which was seen by employers as an essential function in giving young people opportunities to acquire skills that were relevant to businesses and employers.
- 7.5.15 Added to this is the potential for the North East to become a centre for the green economy, with the like of offshore wind turbines being identified as a major manufacturing and supply chain opportunity. The retention of Nissan in the area was also seen as important with the new battery plant creating further opportunities through the supply chain. The introduction of electric vehicles will lead to the development of the country's infrastructure including charging points. In general construction there was also a Government target to have 20% of domestic energy as green energy. This would require housing stock conversion and a lot of work in up-skilling construction staff and also creating further semi-skilled staff. Sunderland College were already delivering courses in this area as the demand for renewable and green technologies continues to grow.

7.5.16 Another important aspect which was identified through the Expert Jury Event were the links with business and industry not being as strong as perhaps they should be. It was noted that employers representation on the 14-19 Strategy and NEET Boards needed to be strengthened. It was highlighted that through the Business Forums that exist it was important for all concerned to create better relationships with employers in the city around apprenticeships.



Figure 8: The emerging green economy – training to fit solar panels

The Views of Young People

7.5.17 The report has so far covered a number of issues relating to work based learning and NEET young people but perhaps we have left the most significant and complex group until last, young people themselves. The Committee realised that it would be important to gain an understanding from young people about their own aims, experiences and opinions around work, training and education. To this end the Committee has interviewed a number of young people both in training, looking for work and those on apprenticeships. In doing this a number of techniques were employed including e-voting surveys, a big brother diary room and informal sessions with groups of young people on training courses.

7.5.18 Many of the young people that the committee have spoken to throughout the course of the review had certain expectations or aspirations on leaving school, and many thought they would almost 'fall' into employment or an apprenticeship programme. The reality for most was very different. One young person explained the extreme difficulties in getting onto a worthwhile course or getting into employment, and it was acknowledged that she had not realised it would be so difficult. The majority of young people interviewed hoped to see themselves either in training or employment, this was supported by the e-voting survey conducted which indicated that 94% of young people surveyed saw themselves either at college, in training or employment. It is important that young people's expectations and aspirations were managed from an early age to ensure they were aware of what truly lies beyond the school gates for them.

7.5.19 A lot of young people, also simply did not know what they wanted to do when they left school. In speaking to a number of apprentices at Sunderland ITeC they all echoed the fact that on leaving school they did not have any real idea about what they wanted to do. There was also a general feeling that options were not fully explained to young people at school, and that for many they ended up following an academic route, being over qualified with a lack of real work experience. The apprentices acknowledged that undertaking an apprenticeship gave them both a qualification and valuable hands-on experience.

- 7.5.20 The young people interviewed from ITeC also informed Members of the Committee that many of their friends and associates had gone down the college route to study for a degree, with no guarantee of employment at the end and the potential for a large student debt. While enrolling for an apprenticeship they saw themselves ending up with up to 7 years practical experience, qualifications, a job and no debt. The apprentices were also very aware that many employers were looking for candidates with practical experience as opposed to qualifications. They also realised that in following an academic route there was often not enough information about what was truly required for a career pathway. The apprentices acknowledged that studying for a degree was not as simple as first seen with many students entering academia without the real facts of what was required.
- 7.5.21 The ITeC apprentices appeared to have a good career pathway and knew where they wanted to be in 2-5 years time. This supported much of the evidence already gathered that those young people participating in apprenticeship programmes are often the most rounded of individuals, showing key characteristics of confidence, team work, self discipline and assertiveness without aggression.
- 7.5.22 The majority of young people interviewed during the research stage of the review were actively looking for work or training opportunities. This conflicts with the stereotype of young people who are often portrayed as de-motivated and work-shy. This is illustrated through a variety of interviews including where one young person, through the Big Brother Diary room, informed the committee that they had “been trying to look for an apprenticeship” while another reported that they had been “looking on Connexions website, looking on any job websites, going round town handing my C.V. in. Also asking friends if they work somewhere, ask them if there are any jobs going.” Finally another young woman informed the committee that she was “just looking for any work really, any training that I can get.”
- 7.5.23 As has already been mentioned many young people who find themselves NEET lack the skills or qualifications to apply for apprenticeships. This was highlighted through the Springboard Organisation who had an open door policy that no young person was turned away. All young people completed an application form and then were interviewed, from this students are either referred to other organisations to develop their basic skills or are put on ‘taster’ courses in vocational areas. Springboard also explained that a lot of learners coming through their doors were worried about their English and Maths skills, essential for modern apprenticeships, and this acted as a barrier for many young people.
- 7.5.24 The young people interviewed at Springboard enjoyed the hands-on practical opportunities they were experiencing and this had given many of them confidence, further developed their skills and key strengths. Many of the learners identified a lack of practical hands-on experience as a reason for leaving their previous courses and many felt that practical experiences gave them more benefit than reading or copying from a text book.
- 7.5.25 This argument is further supported by the e-voting survey carried out with young people. This survey showed that 50% of respondents left their last education, training or employment opportunity because they did not like the course or tutor and a further 13% stating that it was leading nowhere.
- 7.5.26 Young people commented highly on the levels of support available to them and favourable mentions were given to the Sunderland Connexions Service,

Sunderland ITeC and Springboard. Many of the young people interviewed felt they were getting good support and advice from the various services and this was helping them in their search for employment or training. The e-voting survey also supports this in so much as of those surveyed 81% thought they had been given the advice and support they needed.



Figure 9: Hair and Beauty Salon at Hylton Skills Campus

8 Conclusions

The Committee made the following overall conclusions:-

- 8.1 Young people become NEET for a variety of reasons and the majority do not stay NEET for long. It is recognised that the NEET group is not static but constantly changing and moving, this is true in Sunderland as it is regionally and nationally. The family situation and social context of young people has a major bearing on the chances of a young person becoming NEET.
- 8.2 The economic downturn, recession, times of austerity and public spending cuts that the country has endured have all had a major impact on the nation's employment rates and it is young people, historically, who experience this the most. These difficult times may mean that those young people who fall into the NEET group may stay there longer than previously as it becomes harder to find education, employment or training.
- 8.3 School is important, it has a major say in the development of young people and it is the platform from which young people move into further education, training or employment. However, for a number of young people school, its rules and focus on academic studies can be a negative experience and rather than a platform it becomes a barrier to future prospects. Leaving school with little or no qualifications and poor basic skills can severely limit the opportunities open to a young person in a fiercely competitive world. Schools recognise this and are using a variety of strategies to prevent young people from becoming disengaged from the education system. Through the evidence gathered for this review the committee has seen the work undertaken in a number of schools and the variety of techniques being used to help provide the support that some young people need.
- 8.4 The 14-19 strategy was highlighted as a strength and it is important that the local authority has strong links with educational partners and training providers across the city and region. The broadening of high quality vocational opportunities within

the 14-19 offer can only provide greater opportunities for young people and provide a greater range and mix of vocational, education and training provision across the city.

- 8.5 Young people leaving school should, at the very least, have a basic skill set including literacy and numeracy, but for a small number of young people this does not appear to be the case. Throughout the evidence gathering concerns were highlighted that a number of young people were still leaving school with few formal qualifications, this can act as a barrier or the very least see a delay in a young person's progress or transition.
- 8.6 The Schools Bill: The Importance of Teaching will have important ramifications in relation to the whole alternative provision, NEET and academic agendas. It is still unclear what the Government's policy will be in relation to vocational education, but the recent review conducted by Professor Alison Wolf provides major evidence and recommendations will have a major influence on this aspect of education. The White Paper does place an emphasis on an academic pathway through the English Baccalaureate system, and the Wolf Review largely supports this approach. The White Paper also proposes to raise the statutory participation age in education to 18 by 2015, will this see the end of NEETs category for 16-18 year olds or drive them underground making them even harder to reach?
- 8.7 The North East has a good mix of provision catering for post-16 education including 6th forms, colleges and a universities. Young people from Sunderland do not just access the provision locally as many will look to Newcastle, Durham and Gateshead for their post-16 requirements. It is important that there is support for the transition from school into 6th form or college, to ensure during the long summer period, young people do not become disengaged. The post-16 transition is paramount and young people need to be equipped with the knowledge and information they need to make informed decisions about their future pathways. The lack of good information, advice or guidance can be a key factor in becoming NEET.
- 8.8 However, pressure may well be exerted on post-16 educational providers, through budgetary pressures and the impact of funding cuts, to look at their operating models, how they deliver services and the overall curriculum provided. It could be that the future shape of post-16 education is of a more limited choice as organisations look to balance their budgets.
- 8.9 Throughout the course of the review one of the biggest issues raised was the intention to remove EMA funding for young people on work based learning courses. From colleges, employers', training providers and young people the message was the same, that the removal of the EMA funding would make going into further education more difficult for some young people, and present a greater risk of some young people becoming NEET. EMA provides a resource for young people to cover expenses such as travel, food and equipment for their studies and training, without this many young people would be unable to continue or begin post-16 education. However the Education Secretary has very recently announced a £180million a year bursary scheme that will replace the Education Maintenance Allowance. There will be a period of transitional protection for those currently claiming EMA. Those who first successfully applied in 2009/10 will be funded at the same level until the end of the 2011/12 academic year while those in their first year of study and in receipt of the maximum grant will be funded at £20 per week until the end of

2011/12. Currently around 86% of Sunderland's claimants are accessing EMA at the maximum grant level.

- 8.10 It should be noted that this new funding scheme is worth less than half of the EMA, which had annual funding totalling £560million, and will only be available to the poorest college age teenagers, predominantly made of those in care, care leavers and those with severe, multiple and profound learning difficulties and disabilities. This leaves around £165 million that will make up the new DLSF scheme which can be used to support access however the allocation of the funds are left to the discretion of the colleges and learning providers who will decide the frequency and scale of the allocation. This still presents a real challenge to learning providers and it is one that will require innovative measures to overcome, this could include the potential to offer paid commercial experience to young people to supplement the removal of EMA funding.
- 8.11 The funding streams for many initiatives, schemes and courses have either ended or will be coming to an end shortly, exerting real pressure on the continuation of many schemes. This will see Working Neighbourhood Funding for programme led apprenticeships ending in March 2011 along with Train to Gain funding and Activity Agreement Pilots. These were aimed at testing the effectiveness of conditional financial incentives along with intensive support and brokerage of tailored activities in re-engaging young people aged 16 -17 who had been NEET for at least 20 weeks immediately prior to starting an Activity Agreement. This along with proposed increase in contributions expected from employers could prevent or slow down many young people from gaining a place on a scheme or apprenticeship, as this issue becomes more economic in nature. It is not all funding cuts though, as through the Comprehensive Spending Review and 2011 Budget announcements there is a commitment to increase apprenticeship and work experience opportunities for young people.
- 8.12 Young people often leave school with little or no real experience of the world beyond the school gates and what responsibility it means to have employment, or how difficult it can be to gain employment. Training providers from across the region felt schools could and should do more to ensure that young people had a rudimentary grasp of just what work was all about. It must be noted that 16 and 17 year olds are often competing in the job market with more experienced older people, and this can put them at a disadvantage, after all employers are looking for the same package regardless of background. Young people are best placed to learn about work at work
- 8.13 Apprenticeships are seen as the proverbial golden egg when it comes to opportunities post-16 and with demand outstripping supply they are fiercely competitive. Young people falling into the NEET category are often lacking in the requisite skills expected and required of an apprenticeship programme. There is an argument that apprenticeships are not the most suitable vehicle for those young people with long term NEET issues. Perhaps it is better to develop their skills sets while at the same time building their confidence and aptitude before looking further at the possibilities of an apprenticeship programme. It is also worth noting that training providers are reluctant to accept young people onto apprenticeships who are NEET and may not be up to the demands of the programme, after all training providers are remunerated on a results basis.

- 8.14 That Sunderland is a poor 'sell' area when it comes to apprenticeships is disappointing but the Economic Masterplan does acknowledge that the city's future depends on educated, enterprising and ambitious people with the skills to contribute to the city's economy and the region's labour market. A key part of this will be the development and realisation of a Skills Strategy that will provide children, young people and adults with the skills required to support the growth and development of current and prospective industries. Also young people in the city will be supported by the city's engagement with schools as part of the skill strategy. This will maximise productive, entrepreneurial opportunities for young people through 'enterprise in schools' support, city champions and the development of industries such as the creative sector.
- 8.15 Employers recognise the value and potential an apprentice can bring to an organisation, but equally recognise the huge commitment and level of investment that is required to take a young person from raw recruit through to qualified employee. Often only the most rounded of individuals are seen as apprenticeship material and taking NEET young people into such schemes requires different approaches, in many cases a greater level of support, understanding and flexibility is required on the part of the employer.
- 8.16 Apprenticeships can be an extremely attractive proposition to businesses, and a good modern apprentice is a great asset to a business. There is no substitute for real-life working experience and many employers working with training providers, Sunderland ITeC and the Connexions service have given opportunities to young people in Sunderland. Whether in the current economic climate this will continue, it is difficult to predict but bringing new ideas, a fresh pair of eyes or a different viewpoint, into an organisation could be the impetus for future opportunities for that business.
- 8.17 Employers are as concerned as any group that young people coming fresh out of school should be equipped with the basic skills and a positive work ethic. There was a real desire to see more work done in schools around the basic skills that can make a person more attractive within the labour market. It was also recognised that links with Children's Services and employers could be strengthened and this would add another facet to the existing boards which look at 14-19 issues.
- 8.18 Often the problem is that young people simply don't know what they want to do when they leave school and this can inhibit their career choices and advancement. The importance of advice and guidance to young people has never been more important not only for providing career advice but also for managing their aspirations and expectations. Young people are often stereotyped, a little unfairly, as those that the committee spoke with were actively looking for work or training opportunities, although they did not realise how hard this would be upon leaving school. Connexions and other training providers have a real role to ensure that young people leaving school are put on the right pathway that will ensure or at least help them achieve the right outcome.
- 8.19 Young people need exposure to employers in school and can benefit from experiencing the work environment from an early age. Young people need to understand what is expected of them from an employer and while work experience is done in schools is it enough? Nothing teaches young people about work more than actually being in work. There are already huge pressures on the school

timetable but for some young people this experience could help shape where they want to be and what they want to do in life.

9 Recommendations

9.1 The Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee have taken evidence from a variety of sources to assist in the formulation of a balanced range of recommendations. The Committee's key recommendations to the Cabinet and partner organisations (where applicable) are as outlined below:-

- (a) That Children's Services look to explore with schools ways of preparing young people for their post-16 future both for academic and vocational routes with a particular focus on those young people who may not follow an academic pathway;
- (b) That Children's Services work with partners across Sunderland to look at options for a coordinated approach to tackle the issues associated with the removal of the EMA funding from the majority of young people;
- (c) That further utilisation of the Pallion and Harraton Centres be explored in relation to vocational delivery in line with the findings from the Wolf Report;
- (d) Look to develop the 14-19 partnership board to provide a more targeted approach to the issue of NEETs including strengthening the strategic relationship with the Economic Leadership Board, the City's Economic Masterplan and the work of partner organisations;
- (e) Look to engage and develop relationships with employers and seek to have employer representation on the 14-19 NEET Improvement Board;
- (f) That the Council explores the possible options available to help promote and support the benefits of apprenticeships to employers in the area, and;
- (g) That the Connexions Service looks to work with schools and employers in developing and strengthening links to enhance the opportunities available to young people that provide experiences and understanding of work.

10. Acknowledgements

10.1 The Committee is grateful to all those who have presented evidence during the course of our review. We would like to place on record our appreciation, in particular of the willingness and co-operation we have received from the below named:-

- (a) Keith Moore – Executive Director of Children's Services – Sunderland City Council
- (b) Beverley Scanlon – Head of Commissioning and Change Management – Sunderland City Council
- (c) John Rawling – Deputy Director HR & OD – Sunderland City Council
- (d) Suzanne Duncan – Vice-Principal – City of Sunderland College
- (e) John Wood – South Tyneside Manufacturing Forum
- (f) Elaine Murray – Operations Manager – Gentoo Living
- (g) Tyler Moore – Operations Manager – Gentoo Living
- (h) Staff and Pupils from Sandhill View School

- (i) Staff and Pupils from Red House Academy
- (j) Gwyneth Bell - Managing Director - Precision Geomatics Limited
- (k) Neil Hall - Head of HR - Turbo Power Systems
- (l) Gary Robinson - Governor Support Manager - Sunderland City Council
- (m) Christine Robson - Court Manager - Sunderland & Houghton Le Spring Magistrates Courts
- (n) Andrew Carton – Connexions Manager – Sunderland City Council
- (o) Anne Ratcliffe – Controller Training – Nissan Motor Manufacturing (UK) Ltd
- (p) Pat Garrigan – Connexions Area Co-ordinator – Sunderland City Council
- (q) Joanne Mounter – Team Wearside
- (r) Angela Badsey-Doyle – Key Training
- (s) Gillian Laws – Future Strategies Consulting Ltd
- (t) Ian Gardner – Sunderland ITeC
- (u) Liz Nelson – Sunderland ITeC

11. Background Papers

11.1 The following background papers were consulted or referred to in the preparation of this report:

- (a) The Audit Commission, 2010. Against the odds: Re-engaging young people in education, employment or training.
- (b) LSN Learning, 2009. Tackling the NEETs Problem: Supporting Local Authorities in reducing young people not in employment, education and training.
- (c) Community Links, 2010. NEETs: What's really going on?
- (d) I&DEA, 2010. Supporting ambition in our young people.
- (e) Department for Education, 2011. Schools White Paper: The Importance of Teaching.
- (f) CBI, 2010. Ready to Grow: business priorities for education and skills.
- (g) Learning and Skills Council, 2009. Apprenticeships: understanding the provider base.
- (h) Department for Education, 2010. Barriers to participation in education and training.
- (i) Department for Education, 2011. Review of Vocational Education – The Wolf Report.

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES FROM THE E-VOTING

(1) Are you male or female?

Male	69%
Female	31%

(2) How old are you?

16	6%
17	31%
18	31%
19	13%
Other	19%

(3) How long have you been unemployed?

Less than one month	13%
Less than three months	19%
Less than six months	19%
More than six months	49%

(4) Have you previously been employed or taken part in training or education course?

Yes	94%
No	6%

(5) Have you found it difficult to find work, training or an education course?

Yes	69%
No	31%

(6) What do you think about apprenticeships or work-based learning opportunities?

Good idea	94%
Not good	0%
Not sure	6%

(7) Do you think we have enough apprenticeship opportunities for young people in Sunderland?

Yes	25%
No	50%
Don't know	25%

(8) What qualifications did you get in school?

None	19%
Some GCSEs F and G	19%
GCSEs E and F	19%
Mainly Cs	24%
A to Cs	19%

(9) What have you done since leaving school?

Full time work	18%
Part time work	0%
College course	52%
Work based learning	6%
Something else	6%
Nothing	18%

(10) Why did you leave your last education, training or employment opportunity?

Lack of money	13%
Too much travel	18%
Did not like the course	37%
Did not like the tutors	13%
Leading nowhere	13%
Was asked to leave	6%

(11) How confident are you about finding work?

Very confident	25%
Confident	50%
Not very confident	19%
Not at all confident	6%

(12) Would you consider doing training?

Yes	81%
No	13%
Don't know	6%

(13) Would you consider going to college?

Yes	44%
No	25%
Don't know	31%

(14) Would you consider doing an apprenticeship?

Yes	81%
No	13%
Don't know	6%

(15) Do you feel you have been given the advice and support you need?

Yes definitely	38%
Most of the time	43%
Not really	19%
Not at all	0%

(16) Do you have an idea of what job you want to do in the future?

Definitely	56%
Maybe	13%
Not really	25%
Not at all	6%

(17) Looking to the future where do you see yourself in two years time?

At college	13%
In a job with training	19%
In a job	62%
Running my own business	0%
Unemployed and still looking for work	6%

(18) If you have already taken part in training, what did you think about the quality of the training provision?

Very good	19%
Good	37%
Satisfactory	38%
Bad	6%

(19) Do you think there are enough opportunities for work in Sunderland?

Yes	19%
No	68%
Don't know	13%

KEY TRAINING PROVIDERS IN SUNDERLAND

Key Training: Key Training is one of the leading training organisations in the UK, and have been trading since 1965 and are one of the largest in the sector - in the last 10 years they have trained over 200,000 people.

- Young people are often happy to apply online but lose interest when they are invited in for a face to face interview.
- Word of mouth is usually a good way of getting young people through the door.
- Young people expect things to happen quickly and easily and the provider often has to manage these expectations and keep them motivated.
- Young people are often registered with multiple providers.
- All young people are subject to an interview process for each provider.

1st Degree:

- Some employers (particularly small businesses) can't afford to pay minimum of £95 per week in the current climate. Providers are getting feedback that employers want to take people on but are put off by the cost.
- In a salon setting employers want young people who have learnt on the job rather than in a college setting.
- Provider can take young person through level 2 (hair and beauty) but they must be employed to progress to level 3. Young people are often stuck when they reach that level.
- Sunderland Connexions very well thought of among providers.

Future Strategies: Established since 2000, Future Strategies has delivered competency-based programmes to over 70,000 people throughout the UK, making them one of the largest providers in the country.

- Regional work based learning provider.
- No issues in finding employers to take on apprenticeships.
- Young people work 2 days per week in the 'Academy'.
- Young people use qualifications as a stepping stone to college.
- Selection criteria in place. If young people are not right (or not there for the right reasons) for an apprenticeship they are signposted elsewhere.
- Placements are kept close to where young people live where possible.

Team Wearside: TEAM (Training Education Achievement and Motivation) Wearside Ltd, is a Sunderland based Training Provider Charity. Since its establishment in 1991 TEAM Wearside has offered training and support to a range of individuals and businesses across the North East.

- Lots of positions in retail, therefore if young people are looking at a certain route they may be encouraged to take another route depending upon levels of available apprenticeships.
- Foundation learning offered. Tutors spend lots of times addressing barriers to learning such as social, behavioural, housing.
- If young people at foundation stage are not ready to go onto an apprenticeship or a job they are signposted to the Princes Trust.

Zodiac Training: Zodiac Training have been delivering training and development programmes since 1996 and now employ over 150 skilled and dedicated members of staff in offices throughout north-east England.

- National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) provide lists of NEET.
- Vacancy matching service.
- Schools programme – working with early leavers.
- Mock interviews in schools.
- Employers tend to return to Zodiac for subsequent apprenticeships (they have a marketing team that generates placements).
- Training in interview techniques given to candidates.
- If young people are registered with more than one provider they can become confused as to interview schedules etc.

Go4it:

- Local Authority funded, voluntary project working with young people at an area level (east).
- Works with young people pre-NEET.
- Combines 'fun' activities with serious learning.
- Works with the BME community.
- Partnership with Springboard to deliver foundation learning.
- Young people with more complex issues need a lot more support in getting to an adequate level for apprenticeship or employment than others.
- Young people go 'through the mill', i.e. they often return to the Go4it project and can be disillusioned. Staff work with young people to raise esteem.
- Best way of engaging young people is talking to them on the street and knocking on doors.

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service: Princes Trust Programme

- 12 week full time course offered to young people aged 16-25 who are NEET.
- Referrals come from a range of agencies including police, youth offending service etc. Young people can also self refer.
- Leads to a City and Guilds in Personal Development and Community Skills.
- Works on self esteem, working as part of a team, motivation etc – includes a range of activities including work placements; working in the community and physical activities.

Salvation Army: Connect Course

- Funded through WNF (ends in March 2011), delivered through Sunderland College.
- Works with NEETs who cant or wont go into mainstream provision.

Springboard: Springboard Sunderland Trust started in December 1975 as a joint project between Community Service Volunteers (CSV) and Sunderland Borough Council Social Services Department. Springboard creates opportunities for people to achieve their educational, employment and personal goals. In 2003 more than 2300 people worked and volunteered with Springboard in the north east.

- Offers foundation learning and a range of apprenticeships.
- Difficulty in finding placements for young people, would like assistance to engage with employers.

- Young people often aren't aware of what is involved in work.
- Young people on foundation learning can display challenging behaviours which wouldn't be acceptable in the workplace.
- Open door policy – never turn a young person away.

PETAL: PETAL is a new innovative and exciting training organisation established in June 2010 with the support of East Durham Business Services. All of PETAL's employees come from an employment and training background and have a wide range of skills. At PETAL we are committed to providing an inclusive training environment by attracting and supporting a diverse workforce and customer base.

- Offers short taster courses for young people who don't yet know what they want to do.
- Funded by Connexions – cost £100 per person.
- Offer a drop off and pick up service to encourage young people to attend.

ITEC: Sunderland City Information Technology Centre (ITeC) was established in 1982 to help deliver high quality work-based learning.

- Council owned.
- Offers apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships.
- Partnered with Riverside who offer foundation learning.

Milltech Training Ltd: Milltech is an independent training organisation with over 25 years experience in helping young people achieve nationally recognised qualifications.

- 16-18 year olds.
- Apprenticeships only.