PMDU review of young people aged 16-18 not in education, employment or training (NEET)

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Purpose

1. This paper provides the Council with a report of the review by the Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit (PMDU) of the likelihood of the 2010 target for NEET reduction being met through current policy and practice.

Recommendation

2. Members of the Council are recommended to receive and comment on this report.

Background

3. At its meeting on 30 July 2008, Council agreed a programme of reports it wished to receive over the coming year on issues around young people’s learning and skills.

PMDU Review

4. In November 2007, the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) published its strategy for reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). The PSA target for NEETs is to reduce the percentage of 16-18 year olds classified as NEET by 2 percentage points by 2010 (from a baseline of 10.6 per cent at the end of 2004). There are four main strands to the strategy:

- Careful tracking
- Personalised guidance and support
- Provision of a full range of courses to meet demand
- A new emphasis on rights and responsibilities.
To date there has been good progress in reducing the number of 16 and 17 year olds who are NEET (a reduction from 10.4 percent to 9.4 percent between December 2006 and December 2007). However, this appears partially to have been offset by a rise in the number 18 year olds who are NEET. Latest figures show that 13.7 percent of 18 year olds are NEET.

During late May and June, the Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit (PMDU), Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF), Department for Innovation Universities and Skills (DIUS) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) carried out a review of the likelihood of the 2010 target for NEET reduction being met through current policy and practice.

The LSC worked closely with DCSF colleagues firstly, in considering the scope of the review and the fieldwork to be undertaken and latterly in considering the findings of the review and the draft report. LSC was also interviewed a stakeholder.

The review

The review included an analysis of:

- the profile of the NEET group
- what we know about the 16-18 year olds of 2010
- fieldwork to a range of local authorities (some 115 out of 150 local areas chose NEET as a key priority in their local area agreements).

The local authorities (LAs) chosen were those that have shown recent significant improvements in reducing the number of young people NEET at 16, 17 and 18, and those that have had less success. A list of those LAs which took part in the fieldwork is attached at annex A.

Review findings

Factors that have enabled progress:

The review found that local areas attributed their progress in reducing NEET at 18 to:

- NEET being high on their agenda and all partners playing their part
- the tracking of 18 year olds as rigorously as is the case with 16 year olds
- early intervention by schools
- effective use of the September Guarantee to ensure that the right provision is in place to engage every young person.
Key Challenges:

The key challenges identified were the need to:

- reduce the proportion of 18 year olds whose status is ‘unknown’
- support local areas to understand the characteristics of their NEET 18 year olds.
- clarify the roles and responsibilities for supporting 18 year olds
- improve the sharing of data between Jobcentre Plus and Connexions
- ensure all young people get high quality information, advice and guidance
- improve the flexibility of provision to ensure that it meets every young person’s needs
- engage employers to meet demand for work-based learning.

Review recommendations

The following are the recommendations arising from the review:

- Clear messages to local areas about roles and responsibilities and the importance of tracking at 18.
- Joint work between DCSF and DWP on data sharing.
- Test ‘next steps’ Connexions interview for young people approaching their 18th birthday who are at risk of NEET.
- IAG ‘commitment’ for 14-16 year olds and ‘Moving on at 18’ guide for young people.
- Entry to Learning pilots to test the lead professional model.
- Consider opportunities to recognise employers who engage young people – “Investors in young people”.

Next steps

The draft report of the review was considered for clearance by Ministers during August prior to the development of an action/implementation plan by DCSF during the latter part of August/September. LSC colleagues are working closely with DCSF in the drafting of the plan which, it is envisaged, will be taken forward as an integral part of the recently developed Joint (DCSF/LSC) Targets Delivery Plan.

The obvious focus for the LSC in taking forward the DCSF NEET strategy is the ‘provision of a full range of courses to meet demand’. At its meeting on 28 July, the LSC’s 14-19 Board was asked to consider whether there are any specific actions/interventions that the LSC could take to address the issue of those who are NEET at 18 or any specific actions/interventions that the LSC could take to address the issues of specific groups of learners who are NEET at 18 eg, learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, care leavers, young offenders. Regional 14-19 leads will also be asked to
consider this and how best the LSC can build upon existing good practice by providers in responding flexibly to the needs of young people.

15 The outcomes of these discussions, and any arising from Council’s consideration of this paper, will be used to inform the LSC’s input into the DCSF action/implementation plan. A copy of this and the finalised report of the review will be shared with Council members once they are available.

Clearance

This paper has been cleared by Rob Wye, National Director of Young People’s Learning and Skills.

Communications

No external communications necessary.

Impact assessment

The various initiatives and activities described in this paper are intended to have a positive impact on the learning opportunities of young people, and in particular of disadvantaged young people.

Resources

The costs associated with the initiatives and activities described in this paper are within existing plans for increased participation by young people.

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ANNEX A

PMDU Fieldwork Visits

Fieldwork visits were made to the following local authorities:

- Sunderland
- Suffolk
- Nottingham
- Tower Hamlets
- Bolton
- Medway