

hidden talents: exploiting the link between engagement of young people and the economy

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Executive summary

Introduction

The LG Group commissioned NFER to undertake research to support local authorities by identifying a range of opportunities for local authorities and businesses to work together for mutual benefit. The research also aimed to identify and provide case studies of how local authorities have and can create linkages between their work to engage young people, economic development and business support to achieve improved outcomes for young people and employers.

Findings

The following nine themes emerged from the case study examples identified by the research.

1. Simplify opportunities for the business community to work with young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).
2. Engage local businesses in strategy development and designing offers for young people NEET.
3. Use communication processes to create opportunities for young people NEET.
4. Support planning officers to work with businesses to create opportunities for young people NEET.
5. Research the local drivers causing young people to become NEET and develop better targeted support.
6. Raise awareness of how businesses and employers can offer opportunities for young people NEET, and support them to provide such opportunities.
7. Take advantage of new funding arrangements to develop innovative early interventions for young people NEET.
8. Identify and use potential links between initiatives for vulnerable young people NEET, enterprise development and business support.
9. Involve local businesses in careers information, advice and guidance in schools.

1 Introduction

About this research

The purpose of the research is to support local authorities by:

- identifying a range of opportunities for local authorities and business to work together for mutual benefit
- identifying and providing case studies of how local authorities have and can create linkages between the different policies agendas relating to engaging young people, economic development and business support to achieve improved outcomes for young people and employers.

The following nine themes emerged from the research:

1. Simplify opportunities for the business community to work with young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)
2. Engage local businesses in strategy development and designing offers for young people NEET
3. Use communication processes to create opportunities for young people NEET
4. Support planning officers to work with businesses to create opportunities for young people NEET
5. Research the local drivers causing young people to become NEET to develop better targeted support
6. Raise awareness of how businesses and employers can offer opportunities for young people NEET, and support them to provide such opportunities
7. Take advantage of new funding arrangements to develop innovative early interventions for young people NEET
8. Identify and use potential links between initiatives for vulnerable young people NEET, enterprise development and business support

9. Involve local businesses in careers information, advice and guidance in schools.

These themes are set out in Chapter 2 alongside practical examples of work undertaken in local authorities across England to re-engage young people NEET with education, employment and training in partnership with local businesses and organisations.

The term NEET is used in this report to refer to young people aged 16-25 who are not in education, employment or training. The UK Government adopts the term in its strategy and policy making, which is the reason for its use in the current report. However, the LGA (Centre for Social Justice and LGA, 2009) outlines in its *Hidden Talents* report that the term is 'unhelpful' and that it is fundamental to look beyond young people's NEET status at the variety of individual circumstances which can influence the likelihood of their disengagement with education, employment and training. The LGA emphasises:

NEET, although a convenient shorthand, is unhelpful. It stamps individuals with a label based on failure, without offering insight or hope. It is a broad brush that misses the detail of diverse personal experiences and attitudes – for example, family background and educational failure – that we identify across current research as the indicators of failure to enter education, employment or training.

Centre for Social Justice and LGA (2009, p.4)

About the evidence

The evidence for this study includes published research, policy documents, strategies, action plans and good practice case studies that made reference to young people NEET and/or engaging the business community to work with their local authorities in local economic development.

A systematic search was undertaken of the following websites for organisations identified as likely to be involved in promoting business engagement in the

provision of support for young people NEET and local economic development.

- Regional Employment & Skills Boards
- Confederation of British Industry (CBI)
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Chambers of Commerce
- Forum for Small Business
- OECD Local Economic and Employment (LEED)
- Local Government Improvement and Development (LGID: formerly the IDeA) Campaign for Learning
- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)
- Excellence Gateway
- Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS)
- National Education Network
- National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)
- Skills Funding Agency
- Total Place
- The Learning from Experience Trust
- British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (Becta)
- Regional Skills Partnerships
- Business in the Community (BITC)
- Department for Education (DfE)
- Institute for Education Business Excellence (IEBE)
- Institute for Learning
- Learning and Skills Network (LSN)
- Literacy Trust

• Sample of Education Business Partnerships or local skills partnerships

- Prince's Trust
- Regional Development Agencies and Observatories
- Audit Commission
- Fairbridge
- Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG).

Through the NFER's EMIE network of contacts within English local authorities, all 152 local authorities in England were invited to provide examples of where they have linked activities to engage young people with local economic development and, where possible, with relevant strategic partnerships, strategies and action plans. They were also invited to provide both published and unpublished evaluations of such activities. The research team also drew on relevant material posted on the IDeA (LGID) worklessness community of practice.

The search generated 56 documents and 84 potential case studies, which were assessed for relevance. From these, a total of 54 sources and 26 case studies were selected for inclusion in the current review and they provide evidence on the potential for local authorities to better exploit the links between:

- the work they coordinate, commission or deliver on developing the local economy
- the work they coordinate, commission or deliver around the engagement of young people classified as NEET.

Given this is a relatively new area of focus in national and local policy, the current review found limited formal literature of explicit relevance to the current review's specified aims. Very few of the identified and reviewed sources had details about the specific processes involved and actions taken by local authorities to create linkages between the different policy agendas relating to engaging young people, economic development and business support to achieve improved outcomes for young people and employers.

As a result, the relevant sources identified for inclusion in this review focus more on the impacts of the initiatives for those young people who participated and their schools; the financial and economic impacts; and the benefits conveyed to businesses and employers in terms of employee development, reduced turnover and increased engagement.

2 What are the key themes and principles of local authorities' work?

In 2009, Margaret Eaton, Chairman of the LGA, commissioned a programme of work, known as the Hidden Talents campaign, to identify and publicise a range of approaches taken by local authorities to re-engage young people aged 16-24 in positive activities including learning, earning and volunteering. This programme aims to examine from a fresh perspective the issue of young people NEET, the real factors and circumstances underpinning NEET status, and identify existing effective practice in local solutions for engaging young people in education, employment and training.

Throughout the Hidden Talents series of publications, case-study approaches are used extensively. They highlight where local authorities, businesses, and voluntary and statutory organisations have worked and continue to work together to design and implement approaches to tackling the NEET issue in ways which actively involve the target young people, their families and communities for mutual benefit.

As part of this programme, this chapter considers where such approaches combine with local authorities' work to support local enterprise and economic growth. It outlines the actions taken by local authorities to re-engage young people NEET in partnerships with the business community, in relation to nine key underpinning themes and principles. Fundamentally, this chapter illustrates that by working in partnership with the business community, it becomes possible to both identify and make accessible a greater range of opportunities that bring out the *hidden talents* of young people NEET and deliver beneficial outcomes which meet local businesses' specific needs.

2.1 Theme 1: simplify opportunities for the business community to work with young people NEET

The Total Place initiative was launched in 2009 as part of the previous administration's Operational Efficiency Programme (HM Treasury, 2010). Each of the 13 local

authorities involved in this initiative adopted a whole-area approach aimed at piloting different public service delivery models, characterised by:

- freedoms from central performance and financial controls
- freedoms and incentives for local collaboration
- freedoms to invest in prevention
- freedoms to drive growth.

Specifically, the piloting of Total Place budgeting (which is now being piloted by the Government under the name Community Budgets) has enabled local authorities to develop preventative measures in partnership with the business community to avoid young people becoming NEET.

In future, local councils' simplified funding streams and performance management systems (introduced by the Spending Review 2010) may support similar approaches to re-engaging young people NEET; these changes to local budgeting have the potential to facilitate the involvement of businesses in creating the right opportunities for them, resulting in a mutual gain.

For example, the reduction in ring-fencing of individual budgets and associated targets (the recent ending of local area agreements, dispensing with the national indicator set and detailed monitoring by Government Regional Offices) potentially reduces barriers to local authorities trying out new approaches that better fit their context. In practice, the Total Place pilots have enabled the involvement of the business community to support the development of a more simplified offer for young people NEET. This has been possible through undertaking a systematic analysis, from a customer perspective, and having the ability to invest in innovative solutions, as outlined in Box 1.

Box 1: Total Place pilots in Birmingham and Solihull

Birmingham and Solihull local authorities, in partnership with BXL, a not-for-profit organisation working closely with local businesses and employers, have taken advantage of the opportunities provided by being a Total Place pilot. They have developed a suite of preventative programmes aimed at disengaged young people of school age who are at risk of becoming NEET (described as *pre-NEET*). The programmes are tailored in accordance with participants' interests, and comprise aspects of supported work experience and skills development, some of which is accredited. Young people pre-NEET at key stage 4 (aged 15-16) are included in BXL's programmes, as well as young people with special educational needs (SEN).

Some of the programmes offered by BXL are:

- 1. WEX preparation and safety approval support:** offers young people pre-NEET at key stage 4 from all local schools a half-day programme comprised of planning and pre-placement activities. The aim is to guide and support students into entering the world of work, helping them to grasp the links between working and learning, and ensuring that they recognise and minimise workplace hazards.
- 2. Supported WEX placements:** these start in school before progressing to the employer's premises. This programme provides bespoke, one-to-one support for disengaged 14-16 year olds for up to two terms, which can lead to BTEC Work Skills qualifications. In conjunction with a key worker and the employer, participants complete a pre-placement interview, post-placement and termly reviews, a work experience diary, and a portfolio of work.
- 3. Alternative WEX:** at-risk and SEN 14-16 year olds engage with this programme at Birmingham Wheels and Ackers. The programme is delivered in one five-day session or a one-day session over a five-week period. The programme includes building and servicing motor vehicles, health and safety awareness, a vocational project, and possible accreditation in BTEC WorkSkills units and a Youth Service Award.

2.2 Theme 2: engage local businesses in strategy development and designing offers for young people NEET

A theme at the heart of several models has been the increased collaboration between local business leaders and landowners, statutory bodies, local authorities and councillors. Collaboration is used to develop and implement strategies that increase coordination between labour supply, demand and skills work. The practice examples in Boxes 2 and 3 demonstrate how this approach has been used in Leeds and Wolverhampton.

Box 2: Examples of practice from Leeds

In Leeds, the **Aire Valley Partnership Board** has led the economic and structural transformation of the area, and is comprised of a range of representatives including local ward councillors, major landowners, Job Centre Plus, British Waterways, Leeds Business Services, South Leeds Primary Care Trust, Leeds City Council, local business people, Cross Green Business Association and Yorkshire Forward.

Due in part to the decline of manufacturing and heavy industry in the area, the proportion of young people NEET had become a concern. Residents of the local communities were consulted to ascertain their EET needs, and, following a funding injection of £20 million between 2002 and 2007 from the Regeneration Budget, a range of targeted initiatives was launched. These had the joint aims of attracting new investment and jobs to the area; promoting an Access to Employment Network to ensure that city centre residents were able to access the EET opportunities generated by the new investment; and supporting the long-term growth and sustainability of the employment base in the area through developing several initiatives to support new and existing businesses.

Activities supported through the Partnership Board have included:

- education, employment and training (EET) opportunities in the construction sector
- strengthening of community-based job support and training organisations
- expansion of two neighbourhood nurseries to remove lack of childcare as a barrier to engaging in EET
- completion of a major skills audit
- developing bus and tram transport schemes
- grant aid for local businesses to make improvements to marketing, environmental aspects, e-commerce and more generally.

Box 3: Examples of practice from Wolverhampton

The Total Place work underway in Wolverhampton is also helping to build links between local employers, education and training providers, and the local authority. It aims to address gaps in local worklessness initiatives, along with adding value to what is already working well, assisting local businesses and building on existing infrastructures.

Bespoke packages for young people NEET have been created based on the outcomes of consultation exercises with the target group. The Working Neighbourhoods' Fund (WNF) has also supported activity streams aimed at tackling the issue of local young people NEET, such as engaging those in need of services, expanding links with business, and funding skills programmes.

As part of the Total Place agenda, The Business Solutions Centre was set up to develop links with local businesses and to further enterprise services. Local providers including the City of Wolverhampton College, Job Centre Plus, the progressive employment and training charity Steps to Work, and the training provider Ashmore Park IT Training. They have worked together to deliver supported employment and work

experience placements along with skills training packages for young people NEET.

The Total Place work, along with other specific initiatives, has already impacted positively upon a range of targets in Wolverhampton. A reduction in the proportion of young people NEET is on track at 8.2 per cent; teenage conception rates have reduced by 19.8 per cent; skills levels have increased by 10 to 19 per cent; and infant mortality has improved by 15.4 per cent.

The Total Place work of Wolverhampton Education Business Partnership (EBP) is based on the principles of:

- focusing on the customer and their movement through the service
- capitalising on opportunities for sub-regional working
- collaborative working across organisational boundaries
- stopping ineffective provision
- focusing on getting results and return on investments.

2.3 Theme 3: use commissioning processes to create opportunities for young people NEET

The inclusion of social clauses as part of the commissioning process directly enables local authorities to engage the business community as third-party providers of goods and services. The awarding of contracts is contingent upon the provision of opportunities for young people NEET:

Social clauses are requirements placed in procurement contracts and agreements that a local authority enters into with a third party. These conditions are designed to tackle particular social problems or aims, and create economic, social and environmental benefits.

LGID and Jobcentre Plus (2010)

Social clauses can be useful to secure opportunities that include mentoring, work experience and apprenticeships for young people NEET. Given the need to create efficiencies in procurement, these clauses may be incorporated into procurement frameworks shared across public and third-sector organisations. One such example is the West Midlands Procurement Framework for Jobs and Skills, described in Box 4.

Box 4: Procurement frameworks: an example from West Midlands

The **West Midlands Economic Inclusion Panel** (2010) has developed the West Midlands Procurement Framework as part of its strategy for placing jobs and skills at the heart of the decision-making process when the public sector buys good and services. The framework is not specifically aimed at young people NEET.

The framework enables public, private, voluntary and community-sector organisations to contribute significantly to tackling worklessness and its consequences by:

- making access to jobs and skills a core requirement of procurement exercises from the outset
- addressing the real and perceived legal barriers to the use of jobs and skills clauses in procurement exercises
- providing advice and guidance (including bespoke templates) to help embed a focus on jobs and skills throughout the end-to-end procurement process: from setting strategic priorities to contract implementation and monitoring
- signposting procurers and prospective contractors to the range of support and advice that can help both parties deliver on the jobs and skills requirements.

The Panel has produced *The West Midlands Procurement Framework for Jobs and Skills: a toolkit for stakeholders*. It provides:

- guidance for procurement teams including a checklist for the use and relevance of jobs and skills contract clauses
- four model approaches: Charter for Jobs and Skills, Corporate Social Responsibility (Solihull Metropolitan Borough Business Charter for Corporate Social Responsibility), Voluntary Agreement (Birmingham City Council Construction Partnership) and jobs and skills clauses
- model legal documents and protocols
- guidance in relation to European Union procurement rules
- overview of public-sector funded support available to prospective contractors
- self-assessment tool for businesses considering applying for public and third-sector contracts.

The toolkit includes case studies, including the Think Walsall programme, which aims to provide a more holistic approach to supporting individuals, communities and businesses in the borough. Priorities for this programme include worklessness, skills, enterprise and engaging young people in developing aspirations.

2.4 Theme 4: support planning officers to work with businesses to create opportunities for young people NEET

A number of local authorities have used Planning Gain (section 106) to create apprenticeships and employment opportunities, though not specifically for young people NEET. The **Leeds** job guarantee model in Box 5 was developed in partnership with Tesco and used to recruit local people for a new Tesco store in Seacroft. The **City of London** Corporation, in Box 6, has a five per cent levy that funds employment and training initiatives, many of which are specifically aimed at young people NEET and pre-NEET.

Box 5: The Leeds Job Guarantee Model

The **Leeds** Job Guarantee Model, whilst not specifically aimed at young people NEET, was developed by the Aire Valley Employment Access Team under the supervision of the Aire Valley Partnership Board. Aspects of this approach are also outlined in section 2.2.

The board comprises local businesses and major landowners, council representatives, business representatives and support organisations. The purpose of the guarantee is to ensure local people from disadvantaged areas have job opportunities when there are new developments or local employers are expanding their workforce.

The model was developed in partnership with Tesco when it opened a new store in Seacroft. Pre-recruitment training was provided for 280 local people. This included adult basic skills training and explaining what was expected of Tesco employees. A significant number secured and stayed in permanent positions. This established the credibility of the model with existing and potential employers in the area.

Box 6: The NEET City 4A Day programme in the City of London

A key initiative funded by the **City of London Corporation** is the NEET City 4A Day programme. It offers workshops for young people NEET aged 16-25 in the City, and aims to raise their confidence, aspirations and motivation. Delivering employability skills is also a key aspect of the workshops, along with showcasing the range of career opportunities available in the City, including personal assistants, IT specialists and maintenance engineers.

Funded entirely by the City of London Corporation, the City 4A Day workshops are delivered by The Brokerage Citylink, a local charity that aims to raise aspirations in the outskirts of the City. Connexions, local schools and colleges, and local businesses and charities are working in partnership with the corporation on a range of

other partnership and regeneration projects in the area.

In addition to putting stipulations into planning permissions, there are examples of where local authorities in partnership with business have developed models to secure employment for individuals living in disadvantaged areas including young people NEET.

2.5 Theme 5: research the local drivers causing young people to become NEET and develop better targeted support

Some local authorities have examined the drivers underpinning NEET status in their areas through consulting with local young people. Targeted support and interventions are then designed and implemented based on the outcomes of this research. This approach has been implemented in both Worcestershire and Tower Hamlets, as illustrated in Boxes 7 and 8.

Box 7: Targeted support and interventions in Worcestershire

Worcestershire County Council has undertaken their Total Place NEET project in three stages. The initial stage of the work involved working closely with Connexions and Job Centre Plus to identify the extent, characteristics and geographical spread of young people NEET in the area. A review of existing provision for young people NEET across the country and an analysis of good practice in terms of what had worked to reduce the NEET population in other areas were also conducted.

The second stage involved a review of in-depth consultation with local young people NEET to ascertain their support needs in terms of service provision and any barriers to engagement they may be facing. In general, young people requested provision that:

- had closer links with businesses, employers and the world of work
- had greater flexibility with regards to the time of year in which it commenced
- was personalised and recognised their interests

- was delivered in the same place, negating the need to travel between locations.

Provision was redesigned in conjunction with the Design Council in light of the young people's feedback. Worcestershire County Council has now forged more links with local businesses and employers to deliver its NEET provision, as well as the police, children's services and voluntary organisations. The Chamber of Commerce has helped to stimulate employer engagement.

Box 8: Targeted support and interventions in Tower Hamlets

Teenage parents have been assisted into EET in **Tower Hamlets** through an intensive consultation process followed by the delivery of services that are tailored to address their needs. The consultation identified that there were three main groups of teenage parents NEET with distinct circumstances and needs.

Group A: those in this group are not engaged with EET because they are waiting until their child is older. These young people are encouraged to attend specialised groups and integrated children's centres (ICCs) locally to gain support and facilitate personal development. The intention is to keep the young people engaged with the services until they are fully prepared to enter into more formal EET.

Group B: these young people are ready to begin mainstream EET, but are prevented from doing so by a lack of childcare. Care to Learn payments are used to pay for childcare facilities at local colleges and for additional entities, such as transport, that support the young people to remain in education.

Group C: like Group B, young people in this group are ready to engage with EET, but require bespoke provision aimed specifically at teenage parents. ICCs hold drop-in sessions for this aggregate in which they access a range of accredited and non-accredited courses. Other services are available onsite making them more accessible to the young people.

2.6 Theme 6: raise awareness of how businesses and employers can offer opportunities to young people NEET and support them to provide such opportunities

Businesses and employers in some areas have worked closely with local authorities to develop programmes to reduce numbers of young people NEET and help meet mutual goals of raising standards in and engagement with education, employment and training in the localities. Several local authorities have undertaken work that illustrates this: Birmingham (Box 9), Sunderland (Box 10), London Borough of Hackney (Box 11), and Tower Hamlets and Southwark (Box 12).

Box 9: Partnerships with businesses and employers in Birmingham

In **Birmingham**, the organisation Signet Trading Limited is a major employer in several economically deprived wards. Signet is strongly committed to social enterprise work in the local community. Led by its Learning and Development Department, and as a key part of its corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy, Signet worked with Business in the Community (BITC) to develop its Schools Partnership Programme in two local schools.

In partnership with BITC and through consultation with each school, Signet created 12-month action plans outlining how it would provide a suite of programmes including work experience placements, enterprise days, practice interview sessions, reading, numeracy, enterprise and employability skills. Due to the initiative's success, plans for expansion across more Birmingham schools are currently in place.

Both Signet and the participating schools have gained from the Schools Partnership Programme. Impacts for Signet include decreased staff turnover (which can in part be attributed to the programme), savings in employee development costs through training 39 volunteers, and winning the Business Link A&B People Development Award. Pupils at the schools have demonstrated improved reading standards, nine have completed

NVQ placements, and 300 have participated in practice interview sessions. Furthermore, eight Signet employees have become school governors.

Box 10: Partnerships with businesses and employers in Sunderland

Sunderland works closely with Gentoo estate agents and Skills for Health to develop the Pupils First programme. This is delivered within five local schools facing challenging circumstances (the programme has recently been expanded to two further schools). Gentoo offers work placements to selected pupils for one afternoon per week over a two-year period. Placements raise pupils' awareness of the world of work, raise motivation, and develop practical skills. Pupils First has thus far led to 52 Gentoo employees gaining mentoring qualifications. It has also helped two participating schools to achieve record GCSE results.

Box 11: Partnerships with businesses and employers in Hackney

In the London Borough of **Hackney**, the organisation Linklaters is delivering the Working with Learning programme for young people in years 7 and 8 who are identified as being at risk of becoming NEET at 16. The programme runs over three years and aims to raise aspirations and attainment in the borough. It is delivered in partnership between Linklaters, The Learning Trust, Inspire (Hackney EBP), and the local primary and secondary schools.

The programme comprises a literacy support strand for participants, volunteering opportunities, employability skills training, and professional development activities for teachers in local primary and secondary schools. Work experience for older secondary school pupils is offered at Linklaters office in London. Key elements of the

model related to its success, as identified in an evaluation by the University of Warwick, are:

- the structured nature of the programmes
- having one main point of contact at the organisation
- responsible employees undertaking preparation in advance
- involving large numbers of employees
- treating participating young people like adults.

The evaluation highlighted that the model could be improved through:

- communicating better with school leaders including more active promotion of work placements
- including potentially vulnerable young people such as those attending special schools and pupil referral units (PRUs)
- supervisors meeting learners in advance of their commencing the scheme
- having a group induction for learners and supervisors
- maximising opportunities for review, guidance and sharing good practice.

Box 12: Partnerships with businesses and employers in Tower Hamlets and Southwark

Operating across several London boroughs, including **Tower Hamlets and Southwark** in which there are significant pockets of deprivation, is the Nomura programme. The programme is delivered to young people pre-NEET from local comprehensive schools by a network of volunteers linked with the multi-national company Nomura, supported by the company's Community Affairs Team. Participating young people have the opportunity to participate in partnership programmes with schools across the world,

business mentoring, and workshops aimed at boosting entrepreneurship, communication and employability skills.

The scheme has made savings of £150,000 in employee training through boosting staff creative and interpersonal skills. The increased employee skills and engagement achieved as a consequence of the scheme has led to a 240 per cent investment return. Impacts of the scheme for the schools have also been significant. For instance, GCSE results in one of the participating schools have risen by 11 per cent since 2007. Also, pupils at one of the primary schools achieved record attainment at key stages 1 and 2 in 2009.

2.7 Theme 7: take advantage of new funding arrangements to develop innovative early interventions for young people NEET

New funding arrangements have been used to support partnership working between local authorities, businesses and other partners in order to develop innovative approaches for preventing young people from becoming NEET.

The Learning and Skills Network (LSN) report, *Changing the NEET Mindset* (Gracey and Kelley, 2010), advocates expanding the use of initiatives that enable young people at risk of disaffection at key stage 4 to take a year out from their National Curriculum pathway and pursue a range of alternative options, such as bespoke work experience and training packages with local employers and businesses. Such programmes have the dual advantage of re-engaging and motivating those participating towards a career or vocational learning pathway, and also of supporting the local host employers/businesses.

This excerpt from the report outlines what a typical year out would comprise:

This year out comprising a carousel of options should be designed into the National Curriculum at the age of 14/end of Year 9, allowing individual learners to access a broader range of courses, qualifications and facilities than is possible at many schools. Typically, a young person could try 4–6 short courses lasting from a half to a full-term, in

wider practical, vocational and skilled subjects. These would be complemented by enrichment activities in creative arts or community work, and by a strong focus on possible careers with employer-based workshops, hands-on learning, practical tasters and visits to places of work. Core lessons in numeracy and literacy could be built up towards the end of the 'year out' in whichever subjects and courses the young person is most enthused by. Once they are motivated by a subject or skill they enjoy, they feel confident that they can achieve in that subject, and this will be the most effective point at which to contextualise core literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

Gracey and Kelley (2010, p.36)

This approach is exemplified in practice by a number of local authorities including:

- Wolverhampton (Box 13)
- London Boroughs of Hillingdon (Box 14) and Barking and Dagenham (Box 15)
- Gloucestershire (Box 16)
- Central Bedfordshire (Box 17)
- Brighton and Hove (Box 18)
- Derby City and East Sussex (Box 19).

In addition, a longer-term partnership approach is illustrated by the BITC Business Class Programme in Box 20.

Box 13: 'Year out' schemes in Wolverhampton

Some schools in **Wolverhampton** have rolled out such year-out schemes to disaffected pupils after successfully piloting them in the area. During the pilot study, a group of disaffected key stage 4 pupils were taken out of school and allowed to pursue a varied alternative curriculum offer in conjunction with some local employers and training providers. Their progress was tracked and compared with a cohort of pupils in the same year group identified as highly motivated by their teachers. The formerly disaffected pupils actually made greater progress and were more likely to remain in EET post-16 than the motivated pupils.

Box 14: Innovative approaches in Hillingdon

The local authority in **Hillingdon** has an innovative approach to engaging young people pre-NEET along with their families. A multi-faceted programme including vocational workshops, talks, presentations and music sessions delivered by local business people, performers and entrepreneurs has been made available to year 6 pupils and their parents at Uxbridge College for the last three years. The college is ultimately responsible for coordinating the sessions in conjunction with local universities and the local authority. They place a heavy demand on staffing, but have been successful in raising the awareness of young people and their families about the range of local education, employment and training opportunities (Gracey and Kelly, 2010).

Box 15: The Volunteer Mentoring Programme in Barking and Dagenham

Barking and Dagenham's education business partnership (EBP) provides a range of programmes aimed at young people pre-NEET. The Volunteer Mentoring Programme is targeted at pre-NEET young people in the area. It encourages local business people to become mentors for young people at risk of becoming NEET. The aims of the programme are to encourage re-engagement with EET and to raise confidence and aspirations.

There is evidence that the Volunteer Mentoring Programme, in addition to the other targeted initiatives in Barking and Dagenham, has been effective in reducing the numbers of young people NEET. NEET proportions have dropped from 11 to eight per cent, according to statistics from January 2010. Due to its success, the Volunteer Mentoring Programme has been extended, with a target of engaging 400 young people by January 2011. Further expansions planned in the area include a new NEET skills centre to be opened in September 2011, which will provide a range of education and training courses for 400 young people NEET.

Box 16: Use of a single provider in Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire local authority has already made savings of £1.2 million over the last two years through using one provider to deliver all targeted youth services (Connexions, the youth service, youth offending, care leavers and substance misuse). Managers of each agency work collaboratively across service boundaries. This helps to develop their skills and experience as well as those of others.

The contract is dynamic and flexible, and changes in response to demand for services. For instance, when the numbers of young people NEET grew due to the recession, youth workers were able to deliver Job Clubs at youth centres for no extra cost.

Box 17: Inviting competitive bids in Central Bedfordshire

The Employability and Skills Fund (ESF) for Bedfordshire is hosted by **Central Bedfordshire Council**, which operates a shared service agreement with Bedford Borough following their disaggregation. Central Bedfordshire Council implemented innovative practice with the aim of providing effective services for young people NEET through inviting potential provider organisations to place competitive bids for the provision contract.

Public, private, voluntary and community-sector organisations were among the interested parties. The council then led in setting up a network of those interested, which arranged regular meetings to share good practice in providing targeted services to young people NEET.

The contract for delivering employability skills was awarded to the voluntary and community organisations on the basis that their proposal was the most economically advantageous as well as demonstrating a sound understanding of the complex and varied needs of this client group.

Box 18: An Apprenticeship Strategy in Brighton and Hove

Brighton and Hove City Council, through their Apprenticeship Strategy, have expanded the range and type of apprenticeship opportunities for young people in the area. Working with a range of partners including education and training providers, the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), Job Centre Plus, Brighton and Hove Economic Partnership and the 14-19 Partnership, the council has used central funding to increase the number of apprenticeships available for young people by 150, by 2012. The aims of the strategy are, through closer partnership working, to increase collaboration between provider and coordinating organisations, stimulate the growth of sectors in which apprentices are under-represented, increase skills and productivity, support employers to grow their own workforce, improve information, advice and guidance (IAG) services, and increase the range of EET opportunities available for local residents.

Box 19: Communicating with young people, families and partner organisations

Derby City and East Sussex local authorities are specifically responsible for developing communication, commissioning and support for local young people through their role in the trial. The communication strand involves the local authorities consulting with current and prospective partners. These include a range of local employers and businesses, children and young people including those seen to be at risk of becoming NEET by the age of 16, parents, and education and training providers. The aim is to ascertain where the gaps in current provision for young people exist, how they can best be filled to support the local economy, and how all partners can support one another in successfully engaging young people in education and training until the age of 18 by 2015.

Box 20: Long-term partnerships between schools and businesses

The **Business Class** programme, supported by the BITC, is another different example of how apprenticeships have been used to address NEET proportions in local authorities. It also aims to promote sustained rather than short-term engagement with businesses. While targeted at young people at risk of disengagement in secondary schools in areas of greatest need across six out of the nine English regions (rather than those who are already NEET), Business Class operates as a structured partnership between schools, colleges, local employers and businesses which lasts a minimum of three years.

The programme represents an innovative opportunity afforded through commissioning as it places the school in charge of decisions around what is required from its partner business. The programme also operates in a cluster mechanism whereby school and business partners in the same regions work together, meeting regularly to share good practice and pool resources. Schools that have participated in the programme state that the support provided therein has been very effective in raising the aspirations of underachieving young people.

2.8 Theme 8: identify and use potential links between initiatives for vulnerable young people NEET, enterprise development and business support

In their 2010 report *Against the Odds*, the Audit Commission recommended that councils should use local economic assessment processes to strengthen the links between economic development, local regeneration, and Connexions services in increasing employment, education and training opportunities for young people.

Additionally, the DCSF review of 14-19 work-related learning (DCSF, 2007) found that employers generally have a poor understanding of what work-related learning involves, and the role that they can and need to play in its delivery. Employers also tend, inaccurately,

to perceive there to be barriers preventing them from being involved in work-related learning, such as Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. The number of different contacts for the establishment and maintenance of work-related learning can also be a cause of irritation for employers, and a reason for their lack of involvement.

The Audit Commission report concluded by setting out a number of recommendations that are key to the success of such approaches (2010, p.37). These are aimed at councils, Learning and Skills Partnerships (LSPs), children's trusts and 14-19 partnerships.

- Coordinate LSP partners' approaches to reducing NEET levels through:
 - recording and reporting the number of apprenticeships and jobs with training created by partners
 - managing LSP theme and operational groups' actions to reducing NEET levels
 - removing duplicate and ineffective actions.
- Work with local employers and chambers of commerce to develop apprenticeships and jobs with training.
- Lead and support schools in preventing young people from becoming NEET through aligning schools' preventative work with other children's services.
- Develop a local plan for reducing young people NEET and 18-24 unemployment through:
 - developing local targets for both groups
 - prioritising NEET and young people's employment levels in economic development and regeneration activities.

The findings of the above reports are reflected in a number of interventions for young people NEET, specifically developed by local authorities for those young people experiencing additional vulnerabilities such as living in poverty, having disabilities, being involved with the youth justice system, having looked-after status, or being young carers or parents.

The examples in Boxes 21-24 illustrate how these approaches have been implemented in practice by local authorities. The approach taken in Tower Hamlets to target teenage parents NEET in section 2.5 is also relevant to this section.

Box 21: Bespoke packages in Portsmouth

Portsmouth EBP has led on creating bespoke work experience packages with local employers for young people with learning disabilities and difficulties (LDD) who have disengaged from EET or who are at risk of doing so. Young people participate fully in an in-depth consultation process so that packages can be designed that take into account their needs and preferences.

Box 22: A successful NEET initiative in Gloucestershire

The **Gloucestershire NEET Initiative** began as a specialist intervention for care leavers, but, on the basis of its success, has since been expanded to address the needs of other vulnerable groups of young people, including young people involved with the criminal justice system or at risk of being so, those excluded from school, and young people NEET. Initially, the initiative was funded through the Care Leavers Fund, and provided grants of up to £500 to each participant to facilitate their engagement with EET opportunities. Links developed between a range of partners helped to expand the initiatives, such as the local college, training providers, employers and transport services. After three months, of the 36 attendees, 24 had progressed into EET. Delivery staff added personalised incentives to existing provision to add impact. The project represented good value for money, coming in at £11,000 under budget and generating a potential saving of £182,000.

Box 23: Engaging young people with disabilities

Northumberland has taken a successful approach to reducing the proportions of young people with disabilities who are NEET. Prior to the inception of two specifically targeted initiatives, the proportions of young people NEET with disabilities stood at almost one in five.

The first intervention involved two local secondary schools federating to create a sixth form to deliver specialised provision for those with LDD. This enabled young people to stay on at their schools rather than having to attend college to engage with EET provision. Many LDD young people may find the transition from school to college difficult and isolating, which increases the likelihood of their disengaging and dropping out.

A local charitable business had significant input into the second initiatives targeted at young people with LDD who are NEET in Northumberland. Bespoke supported work experience and employability skills packages were created for small numbers of LDD young people by the business in conjunction with local feeder schools and colleges. Participants could choose packages in one of two vocational key areas: horticulture or retail. Significant savings have already been made through engaging LDD young people NEET in the business training and experience strand of the provision. The provision costs £2,160 per person. According to a model formulated by York University, which is based on the average cost to the economy of being NEET, if just eight participants successfully progress into EET, the provision would pay for itself.

teenage mothers. HTP operates from three main sites on the island and has a good record of engagement with local employers along with success in engaging young people who were previously NEET.

HTP's success is underpinned by their reward system: personalised incentives are offered to learners for protracted engagement with the provision. If learners drop out, incentives are revoked. Incentives include:

- vouchers for baby toys and clothes for young mothers
- catering equipment sets for learners engaged with hospitality programmes
- bus tickets for free and unlimited travel on the island
- cultural visiting trips including meals at restaurants on the island
- cash bonuses.

Employers are also offered cash payments for taking on apprenticeships through the provider. An award ceremony is held annually for learners who have successfully engaged with provision at HTP. This is a prestigious event receiving radio and television coverage, and it acts as an additional incentive for young people to continue to engage with the programme. Employers also attend the ceremony and receive awards for their commitment.

Box 24: Targeted programmes for vulnerable young people NEET

Young people NEET with a range of vulnerabilities are targeted through bespoke, incentive-driven programmes on the **Isle of Wight**. The independent training provider HTP leads on the programme, with input from the local authority and local businesses. Apprenticeships, Entry To Employment programmes and specialised initiatives are offered for target groups like

2.9 Theme 9: involve local businesses in careers information, advice and guidance in schools

A 2010 report completed by Deloitte and commissioned by the Education and Employer task force (Deloitte, 2010) consulted with employers and businesses and young people to ascertain how employer engagement in careers IAG could be improved and increased. Local authorities and, in

particular, education business partnerships (EBPs), are well placed to help schools and employers overcome these barriers, because they serve as one of the direct links between the two entities. Connexions advisors are also identified in the report as having a fundamental, although unexploited, role in facilitating these relationships, as well as ensuring the quality and relevance of work-related learning.

Barriers to schools and employers working together to deliver effective IAG were identified as:

- **communication:** employers and schools not knowing how to develop relationships with one another
- **awareness:** employers being unaware of what schools want, and schools being unaware of what employers can offer
- **capability and experience:** schools staff and business are unaware of how to engage with one another
- **geography:** schools in rural areas having difficulty in accessing a variety of employers.

Some examples were identified in the reviewed literature of employers participating in the development and delivery of careers IAG to young people NEET and those at risk of becoming so, see Boxes 25 and 26.

Box 25: Employers' participation in developing and delivering careers IAG

The City 4A Day workshops are overseen in the **City of London** by the local charity Brokerage Citylink, but local business people and entrepreneurs are largely responsible for planning and delivering the workshops. This is integral to the approach. Providing IAG to participating young people is a fundamental aspect of the workshops. Further detail of the approach is in section 2.4.

Box 26: Introducing children to the world of work

Uxbridge College in **London** in partnership with the local authority and the DfE has every July for the past three years invited local primary school children and parents to sessions held by local employers and businesses. The aim is to introduce children to the world of work and show that learning is enjoyable. An integral part of this is providing up-to-date IAG on the relevant fields of employment.

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Implementing outcomes based accountability in children's services: an overview of the process and impact

NFER was commissioned to identify the impact of the OBA approach on LA practice in children's services through nine case studies (18 interviews with strategic and operational staff). The main findings are presented in a thematic report with further details as case studies.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/OBA02/



Local authority approaches to the school admissions process

This report gathers the views of local authority admissions officers on the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches, as well as the issues and challenges they face in this important area. Key findings show that, in most areas, the process was being implemented with fairness, efficiency and clarity.

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LAW01/

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in April 2010, the responsibility for commissioning education and training for 16-19 yr olds was returned to local authorities. This comes at a time when young people who are not in education, training or employment (NEET) are an increasing priority for national and local government.

In this context, the LG Group commissioned NFER to undertake this research to identify a range of opportunities for local authorities and businesses to work together for mutual benefit, and provide case studies of how local authorities can create links between their work to engage young people, economic development and business support to achieve improved outcomes for young people and employers.

This report identifies nine key themes in this area of local authority work. It will be of interest to the LGA CYP Board, the LGA's Economy and Transport Board, LGA policy colleagues, other members of the LGA Group, Directors of Children's Services and DCSF officials.