

Understanding NEETs: lessons for policy and practice – 15 early lessons

A. Impact on providers - This is much more than a research project!

1. **Developed and utilised research skills** – Enabled practitioners to develop and use research skills that have a direct implication for their work.
2. **Developed relationships with partners** – Providers have developed new or built upon existing relationships with partnership organisations and agencies.
3. **Created a community of interest** that has rediscovered outreach skills, and who are also interested in sharing with each other.
4. **A field led innovation in addressing a key and challenging social policy**. A model for future ways of working that captures learner voice and provider energy.
5. **Providers and practitioners need to be aware of, and understand policy, in order to communicate it well**. Practitioners need to be well-briefed, trained and supported. Important role for trusted intermediaries.

B. What does the data tell us about young people

6. **Motivation is Curriculum** – Young and adult NEETS have a wide range of interests and passions. Providers need to take time to find out about what people want to learn and to have the flexibility to provide a range of opportunities to engage them.
7. **The NEET label masks a wide range of diversity** – Many learners face multiple disadvantages and therefore require extensive support and encouragement to successfully take part. Need to take a multidisciplinary approach to engaging young people and enabling them to succeed. Long term individually tailored approaches required.
8. **The route from non-participation into learning and employment isn't a simple or a straightforward one** – Important role for impartial IAG and informed choice.
9. **Schools can damage your learning health** – past experience of learning has a significant impact on current and future learning. Mixed experiences of learning in the sample – negative effects in relation to bullying, getting in with the wrong crowd, poor relationships with teachers, school perceived as boring or irrelevant, non-attendance, suspensions or expulsions.
10. **Catch people when they are ready to learn** – it is clear that for some young people they are/were clearly not ready to engage in learning at certain ages or stages. System needs to be ready to kick in when they are ready to learn.

C. What does the data tell us about adults

11. **If we think that young people are diverse, then adults are even more so.**
12. **People with the lowest skills have the longest journeys to sustainable work.**
13. **Displacement from the labour market can seriously damage your life chances** and early success is not necessarily a guarantee against marginalisation in later years.
14. **Opportunities to learn informally affect attitudes towards formal learning** – Adults were generally positive about learning, often as a result of positive experiences of informal adult learning opportunities in the workplace or third sector. Positive role of informal adult learning in adults' lives, especially as a progression route to more formal learning and role of the third sector in engaging learners.
15. **Big chunks of learning are difficult to fit into busy lives** – adults need to be able to access bite size learning opportunities in order to fit it within the complexities of life.