NEET in Essex: A Review of the Evidence

Dr Paul Stoneman and Dr Darren Thiel, Department of Sociology, University of Essex

Contact:
pstone@essex.ac.uk
djthiel@essex.ac.uk

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AIMS OF THE REPORT

This report reviews the published research evidence on the factors and processes that lead some young people into becoming 'Not in Employment, Education or Training' (NEET), and the policy interventions that are deemed to prevent this. It also includes a previously conducted Latent Class Analysis (LCA) of the 2009 Essex NEET cohort, which is analysed alongside the more general published evidence. The literature reviewed was generated from wide rage of bibliographic search engines, academics, policy makers and practitioners working in this field

The review will contribute towards the development of more effective policy interventions, and provide an initial foundation for the development of a possible multi-method research project. A primary research project will be able to provide more robust inferences on the causes and processes of becoming NEET and on the interventions designed to prevent this. This will enable Essex County Council to better target and implement effective policy interventions, ultimately reducing the social and economic costs of youth unemployment in Essex.

REPORT STRUCTURE

The report is divided into two main sections. The first section is an introduction to the review strategy and an analysis of factors and processes associated with young people becoming NEET. The second section forms the main body of the report and assesses the evidence base on various policy interventions deemed to prevent young people becoming NEET. This is followed by a short conclusion.

1. THE CAUSES OF NEET STATUS

The underlying factors associated with NEET status cited in the literature are:
- economic deprivation and non-working parent(s);
- poor access to local jobs;
- low academic attainment;
- large family size;
- parental conflict;
- poor schools;
- teenage pregnancy and parenthood;
- truancy;
- special education needs and learning difficulties;
- low motivation and aspiration including lack of confidence, sense of fatalism, and low self-esteem;
- 'locked-in' and dense local social networks;

- low levels of parental support;
- living in care or living independently; and
- health problems.

It is important to understand that these factors are not necessarily causes but rather they may be correlates. Moreover, the factors rarely operate in isolation but tend to co-occur and are often 'additive' and build upon one another. For example, one ubiquitous factor behind NEET status is economic deprivation but it is factors related to deprivation (e.g. poor hosing, parenting, nutrition etc) that are causal and not deprivation itself. Moreover, the LCA, demonstrates there are a significant number of the Essex NEET group that are not from deprived backgrounds, and not all of those from a deprived backgrounds end up as NEET.

Additionally, published literature tends to homogenise NEET groups, viewing them as a single object rather than a collection of groups and individuals. The results generated by the LCA, for example, uncovered a broad typology of 'NEET subgroups', some of whom demonstrate significant differences from what is described in the literature. The LCA suggests:
- Variations found in the economic backgrounds of the Essex NEET groups, with a slight majority not from wholly deprived backgrounds (52%).
- Variations in educational attainment across time, with an estimated 40 per cent of the NEET group suffering from persistently low educational attainment, and 60 percent demonstrating above average grades at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, but experiencing a 'Key Stage 3 dip' where their attainment drops in the first two years of secondary school.
- The vast majority of the Essex NEET group do not fit the common image of NEET groups as youth offenders who often play truant is misleading. Where factors such as substance abuse, truancy, and youth offending are found alongside low educational attainment and NEET status, they are just as likely to be correlates of becoming NEET and cannot be deemed causes.

Further research is thus necessary to identify and isolate causal powers and processes, and to disentangle causes from consequences. Research should also aim to identify the 'resiliencies' displayed by some individuals that possess the main background characteristics of NEET groups but who do not become NEET. On the other hand, published evidence suggests that the socio-economic class of parents has powerful effects on young people becoming NEET. Yet the LCA data did not allow us to ascertain the social class effects of Essex NEET groups, and it too requires further research.

2. ASSESSING THE INTERVENTIONS

The evidence suggests that the onset of becoming NEET frequently starts early on in an individual's life, and that poor educational attainment is the most likely immediate factor predicting NEET status. The review thus examines various interventions to improve educational attainment and those interventions aimed at the flow of current NEET groups and their parents.

As the LCA indicated that 40 per cent of the NEET group (LCA groups 4 and 6) consistently performed poorly across their educational life, the review analyses the potential of early intervention programmes to lift these groups out of poor school attainment, and the interventions aimed at primary school-age children. Additionally, as 60 per cent to of the Essex NEET group experienced, to some degree or another, a 'Key Stage 3 dip', interventions implemented during secondary school (ages 11-16) are also reviewed. Given that NEET groups notoriously fail to respond positively to formal educational mechanisms, there is a particular focus on the effectiveness of supplementary, vocational and alternative education programmes.

THE INTERVENTIONS

There are a number of national and local interventions on-going and on offer, but the literature shows that these tend to be plagued by low take-up and implementation drift. This later issue is especially salient in terms of the recent push towards multi-agency work where coordination and role definitions are commonly confused, inhibiting the delivery of effective interventions. In this context, it may not be that a raft of new interventions need to be introduced, but that existing interventions require research, evaluation and monitoring

The reviewed interventions are split into five main sections:
- early-age intervention (1-5 years);
- primary school interventions (5-11 years);
- secondary school interventions (11-16 years);
- interventions to designed to deal those with already NEET (16-25 years); and
- interventions aimed at workless families and single parents.

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a. EARLY-AGE INTERVENTIONS (1-5 YEARS)

Prevention is cheaper than cure. Intervening at an early-age has been shown to save considerable expenditure in the long term in terms of the drain on later resources of the entrenched problematic behaviour of some individuals.

Pre-school teaching programmes
- The High/Scope programme in the USA has been robustly shown to be very effective in increasing education attainment and decreasing behavioural problems.
- However, evaluations of national pre-school programmes such as Head Start in the USA and Sure Start in the UK do not show such significant outcomes.
- The different outcomes are a partly a product of national evaluations being too general to identify local differences, but they are also a result of implementation inefficiencies and implementation drift. This is mostly as result of early-age teachers being under paid, under qualified, teaching an incorrect curriculum, and not involving parents in the programmes regularly enough.

b. PRIMARY SCHOOL INTERVENTIONS (5-11 YEARS)

Early age interventions may not be enough to equip all children for their subsequent schooling, particularly those from deprived areas and those growing up in difficult family and personal environments.

The Children's Fund
- The national evaluation of the Children's Fund shows mixed results, suggesting that the joined-up, multi-agency aim of the programme suffered a number of organisational barriers.
- The main outcome of the Fund's programmes were out of hours school clubs that can be effective if they draw parents into the programme, but are largely ineffective in terms of educational attainment and behavioural issues.
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Reading Recovery Intervention
- If students fall behind with their reading skills early on in their education, this contributes significantly to their attainment later on.
- Reading Recovery Intervention programs can be effective to prevent this.

Therapeutic interventions
- A child's behaviour at school clearly affects educational attainment and their later experiences of work, education and training.
- Some forms of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) show that, over the short-term at least, some children's behaviour improves.
- Evidence also suggests however, that CBT programmes may work better for older children, post-primary school (12-13 years old), particularly for boys.
- For all ages, outcomes are improved if the programmes also include academic tutoring and which attempts to work with parents. Indeed, evidence suggests that in terms of later educational attainment, extra literacy classes can be just as effective as CBT, especially if parents are encouraged take an interest in the classes.

Parenting programmes
- Particular styles of parenting appear to contribute to educational outcomes.
- Evidence on the effectiveness of parenting programmes is mixed but some types of programme have been found to be effective for some parents.
- 'Parent Management Training' has been found to be most effective in changing parent's and, thus their children's, behaviour, although it is unclear whether this is a long or short-term outcome.

c. SECONDARY SCHOOL INTERVENTIONS (11-16 YEARS)

Early-age interventions, if implemented correctly, are likely to better prepare 'at risk' groups for their subsequent education and employment. However, as the LCA indicates, many of those that become NEET appear to be well equipped for secondary school in terms of their high Key Stage 1 and 2 results. The transition to secondary school however involves a number of changes, adaptations and strains that begin to contribute to the increasing disengagement of some young people, as is shown by the 'Key Stage 3 dip'.

Improving standard education

- The more money that local authorities spend on schools, the better the attainment of their pupils. Money however also needs to be effectively targeted, and collections of schools might increase cost-effectiveness by pooling resources for interventions addressing at risk groups.
- Schools with clear, fair and consistently enforced rules tend to have lower rates of pupil misbehaviour, and schools that administer high levels of punishment and low levels of praise tend to display the most pupil misbehaviour.
- Certain pedagogies may help alleviate the Key Stage 3 dip. Encouraging student-centred teaching that is tailored to their needs, encompassing teaching and learning that is challenging, involves novelty and encourages autonomy, has been shown to be effective.

Supplementary education

- Increasing teacher to pupil ratios significantly improves both student attainment and behaviour.
- Good results can be achieved with a maximum of 15 students to one teacher, which continues to be effective even where two teachers work with a single class of 30 students.
- Other effective educational supplements include: separating the worst behaved students into a separate two hour class each day taught by a suitably effective teacher; and teaching based on 'Multiple Intelligences' which improves pupil self-esteem in order to increase attainment.

Early vocational training

- Some evidence suggests that early vocational training impacts positively on student behaviour and attitudes towards their education.
- However, data shows that, in the longer term, early vocational training may have a negative effect on employment outcomes. This is largely because early vocational qualifications are deemed inadequate by employers in relation to standard GCSEs.

Alternative education

- The evidence on alternative education shows similar results to early vocational training, although alternative education is more positive in terms of its short-term effects on student behaviour.
- The positive results are likely however to be consequence of small teacher-student ratio rather than an effect of the programme content.
- In terms of cost effectiveness and long-term outcomes, supplementary education that teaches the 'gold standard' GCSE curriculum is likely to be much more effective. This would be especially salient for LCA group 2 who are clearly talented and more than capable of achieving the highest grades at GCSE level.
- For LCA groups 4 and 6 that consistently under-perform, vocational training may be more appropriate.
- For those with continuing severe behavioural problems, alternative education may be an effective option.

d. DEALING WITH CURRENT NEET GROUPS (16-25 YEARS)

Groups that find themselves NEET suffer a multitude of compounded problems that inhibit their finding employment or training. Those that live in deprived areas suffer low levels of local employment, a sense of fatalism and limited outlooks, and they lack access to formal employment networks. They also of course lack the formal educational qualifications that so often unlock the door to employment and training.

Mentoring
- Evidence on effectiveness of mentoring is mixed but it does tend to suggest that mentoring can increase the chances of finding employment, especially if mentors are better matched to the mentored.

The connexions service
- National evaluations of Connexions show some successes but they also show that the service is plagued by coordination problems with its related agencies, particularly schools, and that is fails to access many NEET groups.
- A 'no closed door' policy and 'one stop shops' that coordinate intervention services are likely to improve the Connexions service.

Teenage pregnancy and parenthood
- Having a child at an early age clearly makes it problematic to engage in employment, education or training, particularly for young mothers.
- Recruiting older and more experienced mothers to mentor teenage mothers significantly reduces child maltreatment.
- A programme in the USA that employed family nurses to work with young at risk mothers throughout and after pregnancy showed a number of positive benefits for parenting and child health**.**

Transport
- Young people in deprived areas travel little and think locally. This affects where they will seek employment or training.
- Disadvantaged young people who are qualified drivers are twice as likely to be employed as those not qualified to drive.
- Offering driving lessons to groups of current NEET may attract hidden groups; increase their engagement with learning; increase self-esteem and outlook on distance; and provide a strong incentive to earn an income.

Housing
- Overcrowding and moving house are significant factors underlying poor academic achievement.
- Better and more stable housing provision is likely to have positive outcomes on young people's educational performance.

e. WORKLESS HOUSEHOLDS

Workless households tend to be concentrated in deprived areas and young people growing up in them are much less likely to become employed than those from working households. Yet if one member of a workless household becomes employed, this has a multiplier effect increasing the probability of other household members finding work.

Reducing workless households
- Workless household tend to not access employment services. A 'no wrong door' policy that integrates and joins-up adult and children's services around the needs of whole families would be likely to increase service effectiveness and access, and reduce expenditure.
- The long-term unemployed require gradual immersion into employment or training, otherwise they are likely to become further alienated. Yet government targets to get people into work inhibit a gradual approach.
- The 'Slivers of time' scheme piloted in East London has been successful in gradually getting many long-term unemployed into employment, and also it benefited employers. This can only work effectively with a flexible benefit system.

POLICY IMPLIMENTATION

As a result of implementation issues, local variation and a lack of robust evidence on most policy interventions to prevent young people becoming NEET, it is not possible to know with any certainty which interventions would be most effective to implement in Essex, although some of them have been shown to be more effective than others. For the interventions identified as most likely to be effective, we recommend that ECC, in partnership with the research team, pilot a number of small scale programs that are organised, monitored and evaluated by the research team.

We suggest the piloting and monitoring of four main programmes:
- An Early-age intervention pilot, which is implemented and organised via the tenets of successful early-age intervention programmes.
- A supplementary education pilot, where local schools pool resources to employ one suitably qualified teacher to provide three 1.5 hour classes per day to a group of 15 students in each of the three schools.
- A supplementary education pilot, where two teachers share a single classroom to teach literacy and neumeracy to students that are falling behind.
- A dedicated outreach programme based in 'one stop shops' an a 'no closed door policy' that target workless families and strive to join-up, in a holistic manner, the various services and interventions aimed at workless families.

Only through pilot and monitoring we be able to specifically identify what works, under what conditions and for whom, and, from this, be able to design better targeted, cost effective and more successful future interventions. Furthermore, generating methodologically robust evidence on piloted interventions will enable ECC to generate central government and European Union funding to further roll out successful intervention projects.

3. CONCLUSION: THE NECESSITY OF FUTURE RESEARCH

The review highlights a number of key areas for future research. A major issue for the research team is their lack of insight into how local services for NEET groups in Essex are organised and implemented. A short qualitative research project exploring local service provision and use is highly recommended.

There is also a need for greater emphasis on studies which can offer a more robust analysis of NEET-based policy interventions, and for a greater understanding of the processes that lead some young people into becoming NEET. In-depth research into individual psychological variables and how they interact with home, school and community factors over different time periods and transitions would provide evidence to develop effective profiling programmes beyond the current LCA. This research would ideally be longitudinal analysis incorporating a significant qualitative aspect in order to effectively demonstrate when and how changes in attitudes and educational performance occur, and why this is so. Indeed, longitudinal research and experimental design pilot and monitoring studies are also the only way to truly measure the effectiveness of various policy implications, and consequently a powerful way of attracting new funding.

The sharing of practice within and beyond the UK setting might also offer greater insights into effective interventions and into the development of transferable practice. This would enable ECC to provide intervention services and management advice to other local authorities.

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Contents:

1. INTRODUCTION:
REVIEW STRATEGY AND FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH NEET

This review has been commissioned to outline the evidence base on young people 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET), which conventionally refers to 16-19 year olds. The review will contribute to an analysis of background factors deemed to determine NEET status, and it will analyse the effectiveness of current policies and interventions to prevent this in Essex, as well as assess any additional interventions identified in the literature. It is envisaged that the review will provide initial policy suggestions and the basis for the development of a longer term, multi-method pilot and monitoring project to provide Essex County Council (ECC) with reliable inferences on the causes of NEET status and policy interventions, which will ultimately reduce the social and economic costs of youth unemployment in the region.

For various empirical reasons outlined below, the focus will be mostly on the school and home lives of young people, and on the different forms of educational provision that have been implemented to prevent youth disengagement from education, training and employment. The literature reviewed was generated from a wide range academics, policy makers and practitioners working in the field of young people NEET.

The review also builds upon previous research carried out by the investigators for ECC using Latent Class Analysis (LCA) of current Essex NEET groups. Through this, the investigators uncovered a broad typology of 'NEET subgroups' that are compared and contrasted with the more general evidence base. By combining the evidence from the LCA with the broader evidence presented in published literature, the review will demonstrate the policy interventions that appear most effective to the specific NEET population in Essex.

i. The literature to be reviewed

The literature relating to the causes of NEET status can be broadly split into two groups. First, there are those that directly analyse NEET groups and which assess broad policy interventions to get 16 to 19 year olds back into education, employment and training. Second, there is a body of literature that analyses the pre-cursors to NEET status, most predominantly poor educational attainment. This later literature is reviewed to assess which are the most effective *preventive* measures of becoming NEET.

It should be noted that the numbers of published literature more indirectly related to young people's disengagement from work and education is vast, and it was not possible to review all of this in the short time period provided for the review.

ii. NEET in context

The research programme was driven by the need to explain the various pathways into NEET status, to evaluate how best to intervene in and prevent the onset of NEET status. In the published literature however, very little attention has been paid to 'NEET pathways', with most research focusing on very broad social and economic problems associated with NEET status at one point in time.

A strategy document published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007) identifies two key aspects of young people aged 16-18 who are classified as NEET: first, the group is 'not static but rather a rapidly changing group', and second, 'the NEET group is not homogenous'. This document also shows that in general:

- 'The 'NEET' group is getting older – 52 per cent of those 'NEET' are of academic age 18, compared with just 40 per cent 5 years ago;
- The gender gap is widening – 16 year old boys are now more than twice as likely to be 'NEET' as 16 year old girls;
- More young people are 'inactive' and are not looking for work or learning;
- 39 per cent of those with no GCSEs are 'NEET' at 16, compared with 2 per cent of 16 year olds who attained 5 or more A*- C GCSE grades;

Other research shows that young people NEET do share some central characteristics:

> 'To describe those who are NEET at 16+ as a "group" is clearly a misnomer. But it is undoubtedly true that among those who are NEET, there is a substantial majority of young people who, after 11 years of statutory education, are united by their common experience of…low educational attainment, relative underachievement and alienation from the education and training system' (Williams, 2007: 29)

Low educational attainment, relative underachievement and alienation from education and training systems are clearly key characteristics of NEET groups. However, a major concern for this review is the problem of identifying which factors underlie these issues and the degree to which we should treat these factors as causes or merely correlates of NEET status.

More generally, the most frequent characteristics of NEET groups cited in the general literature include:

- economic deprivation and non-working parent(s) (Cusworth et al., 2009; Comptroller and Auditor General, 2007; Meadows, 2001; Dolton et al., 1999; Cassen and Kingdon, 2007; Strelitz, 2003; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005);

- poor access to local jobs (Comptroller and Auditor General, 2007);

- low academic attainment (Meadows, 2001; Dolton et al, 1999; Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007);

- large family size (Meadows, 2001, Dolton et al. 1999), with overcrowding and poor housing being the major casual factor (West and Farrington, 1973; Strelitz, 2003);

- parental conflict (West and Farrington, 1973; Farrington and Welsh, 2007);

- poor schools (Cassen and Kingdon, 2007);

- teenage pregnancy (Morash and Rucker, 1989; Cusworth et al, 2009; Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007);

- truancy and absenteeism (Meadows, 2001; Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007);

- special education needs and learning difficulties (Young People Directorate, 2010; Cassen and Kingdon, 2007; Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008; Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007);

- low motivation and aspiration including lack of confidence, sense of fatalism, and low self-esteem (Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008; Strelitz, 2003);

- 'locked-in' and dense local social networks (Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008; Comptroller and Auditor General, 2007; Meadows, 2001; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005);

- low levels of parental support (Meadows, 2001; Sylva et al 2004; Strand, 2007);

- living in care or living independently (Meadows, 2001); and

- health problems (Meadows et al, 2001)

Most of this literature it is not clear as to which factors are the causes or the effects of NEET status or which factors are simply correlated with being NEET (cf. Farrington and Welsh, 2007). Moreover, numerous factors tend to co-occur and it is thus difficult to separate out which of these factors determine NEET status.

General statistics presented by the literature do then not allow us to dig deeper into the contextual and individual nature of young people's pathways into 'NEET' status. The figures do give the overarching picture, but they also tend to be framed by notions of a heterogeneous NEET population. The LCA shows, on the other hand, that such notions are, to some degree, misleading with regard to current Essex NEET groups (see below).

iii. Deprivation effects

As mentioned, the literature tends to focus on deprivation as the major underlying factor predicting NEET. However, literature also identifies that it is factors associated with deprivation rather than deprivation itself that are the likely causes implicated in becoming NEET. These factors include:

- large family sizes;
- overcrowded housing conditions;
- strained and unsupportive parenting;
- low value social networks and lack of role models;
- poor schools and services; and
- poor nutrition and health.

In terms of NEET in Essex, the UK Indices of Deprivation ranks Tendring as the third most deprived area of the country out of a total of 32,482 areas (Noble et al, 2008). Basildon and Braintree are ranked 134 and 252 respectively, and each of these areas show higher than average numbers of young people NEET.

Locally, compared to a national average of approximately 6.7 per cent NEET - which is also the level across Essex as a whole (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2009) - the Essex NEET area numbers are disproportionate, which reflect, to some degree, the high levels of deprivation in these areas. This picture of Essex NEET is though static. National data shows that that there are high levels of 'NEET churn', whereby 16 per cent of 16 year olds become NEET at some point until 18 years old, but this does tend to drop off later in life (Young People Directorate, 2010).

iv. The latent class analysis[1]

The LCA illuminated three key aspects regarding the current NEET population in Essex. First, while it cannot be denied that a ubiquitous factor behind NEET status is economic deprivation, the LCA demonstrated that there are a significant number of the Essex NEET group that are not from impoverished backgrounds (52%). Furthermore, not all of those from a deprived background end up as NEET.

An estimated 40 per cent of the Essex NEET group are from impoverished background *and* experience persistently low educational attainment. Yet the remaining 60 per cent, apparently regardless of economic background, achieve average or above average grades at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, but then experience a 'Key Stage 3 dip'. This is a significant finding in terms of educational attainment pathways, and it points to mid-range factors involved in becoming NEET, mostly likely related to school, culture and adolescent-age effects.

The LCA also demonstrates that the prevailing image of NEET groups as youth offenders who often play truant or engage in unlawful activities is misleading. The vast majority of NEET groups in Essex do not fit this image. According to the Total Place NEET database, 85 per cent of all current NEETs in Essex do not record any issues of truancy, youth offending, substance abuse, pregnancy, homelessness or a refugee status.[2] Furthermore, the evidence suggests that factors such as substance abuse, truancy, and youth offending are likely to be correlates of becoming NEET and should not be seen as causes, although further research is required to disentangle these factors.

v. Interventions reviewed

The review will break down the possible interventions into five main sections and types:
- early-age intervention (1-5 years);
- primary school interventions (5-11 years);
- secondary school interventions (11-16 years);

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[1] See Appendix B for a review of the different latent class groups and a description of their nature.
[2] A caveat here is that these are instances of 'recorded' issues only.

- interventions to designed to deal those with already NEET (16-25 years); and
- interventions aimed at workless families and single parents.

The LCA shows that 40 per cent of the Essex NEET group (latent class groups 4 and 6) consistently performed poorly across their educational life. The review will therefore look at the potential of early-age and primary school interventions that aim to lift these groups out of poor school attainment. The second and largest LCA group to consider are the 60 per cent who experienced a 'Key Stage 3 dip'. Here the review will analyse interventions implemented during secondary school (ages 11-16). Given that potential NEET groups consistently fail to respond positively to formal educational mechanisms, there will be a particular focus on the effectiveness of supplementary, vocational and alternative education programmes.

While preventive measures represent the most cost effective long term strategy (Romeo et al., 2006), and evaluations have found that some forms of early-age intervention are very effective (Steinheart, 2005), it would be unwise to rule out later interventions aimed at primary and secondary school children and those aimed at current NEET groups and their families. Singular interventions are unlikely to address the multi-faceted problems found in, in particular, high deprivation areas. Consequently, intervention for the most deprived and disadvantaged groups needs to be holistic across the life courses of various individuals and their families (Little and Axford, 2004; Social Exclusion Task force, 2008b). In this respect, much contemporary research suggests targeting whole families for intervention, and uncovering the optimal balance between prevention, early intervention, and treatment (Little and Axford, 2004).

Indeed, as a result of persistent and, perhaps, strengthening cycles of inter-generational deprivation (see Blanden et al., 2005), interventions aimed at one stage of an individual's life course are likely to impact on other individuals at risk of becoming NEET. For example, interventions aimed at current NEET groups could also function as 'very early intervention' in terms of tackling the disadvantage faced by the children of the groups. The research evidence is very clear that children of workless families are much more likely than average to become workless themselves (Comptroller and Auditor General, 2007). The review will thus also analyse interventions for current NEET groups and those based on encouraging members of workless families into work.

2. INTERVENTIONS TO PREVENT NEET

a. INTRODUCTION

Since 1997, the New labour Government has introduced a raft of policy changes to address child poverty, poor educational performance, and, more recently, social exclusion and the numbers of young people who are NEET. This chapter looks at 'what works' in terms of addressing various needs and preventing unwanted outcomes related to becoming NEET, and it also analysis 'what works' in terms of implementation strategies and prioritisation of funding and effort.

There are a number of national and local interventions on-going and on offer, but the literature shows that these tend to be plagued by low up-take and implementation drift (Coles et al, 2004; Edwards et al, 2006). This latter issue is especially salient in terms of the recent push towards multi-agency work where coordination and role definitions are commonly confused inhibiting the delivery of effective interventions (Coles et al., 2004; Hayden, 2007; Little and Axford, 2004; Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008a). In this context, it may not be that new interventions need to be introduced but existing interventions require research, evaluation and monitoring.

The literature indicates that interventions are however, extraordinarily varied across different parts of the country and that they are locally contingent. The consequence is that general evaluations draw very few reliable conclusions pertaining to their effectiveness, and, in many cases, it was not possible to draw conclusions about local practices in Essex from the more general literature. What the more general evaluations do show however is that aspects of the interventions work for some people some of the time. The question then is why these interventions do not work effectively for some particular groups that become NEET.
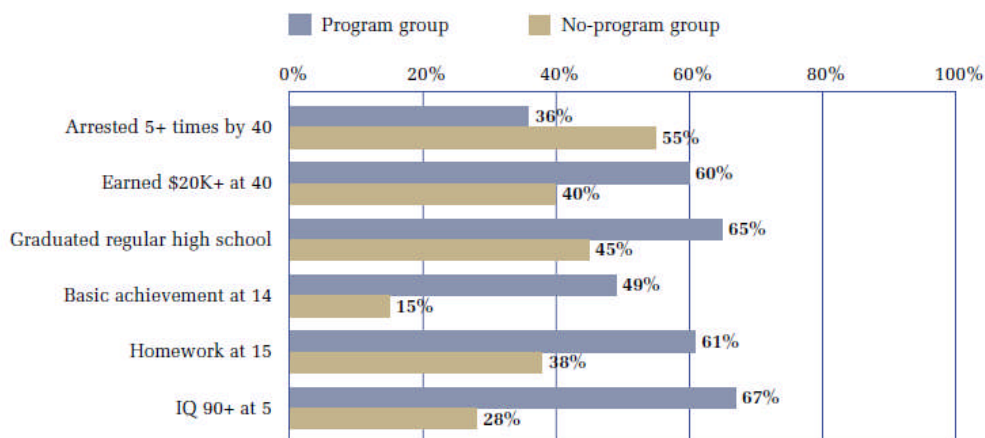
b. EARLY-AGE INTERVENTION (1-5 YEARS)

Since the 1990s, early intervention to prevent the development of risk factors implicated in producing low educational attainment, particularly in the form of schooling for pre-school age children, has become increasingly popular in policy circles (Farrington, 2000). Recently evidence has been generated relating to the cognitive and brain development of young children from deprived backgrounds. Early-age interventions have been shown to effectively shape children's brains to be more suitable for formal educational learning and prevent the onset of antisocial behaviour (Farrington and Welsh, 2003, 2007; MacDonald and Roberts, 1995). Much of the evidential impetus for early-age intervention was initially drawn from the High/Scope Perry Preschool Study (Steinhart, 2005) which provides robust evidence about the positive impact of a particular form of early intervention.

i. High/Scope

The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study was originally implemented 1962-1967 to a sample of 123 low-income African American children in the USA deemed at high risk of school failure. Half were assigned to control group with no intervention, and half received two years pre-

school education from the ages 3 -4. This involved 2.5 hour classes taught to groups of between 5-6 children. All teachers held Bachelor's degrees and based their teaching on the Cognitively Orientated Curriculum. The research team collected data on the control and experimental group each year from 3-11, then again at 14, 15, 19, 27 and 40 (with only a 6% attrition rate). The study had striking results over the long term (i.e. by age 40) as shown in the graph below.

Major Findings: High/Scope Perry Preschool Study at 40

■ Program group   ■ No-program group

	Program group	No-program group
Arrested 5+ times by 40	36%	55%
Earned $20K+ at 40	60%	40%
Graduated regular high school	65%	45%
Basic achievement at 14	49%	15%
Homework at 15	61%	38%
IQ 90+ at 5	67%	28%

The High/Scope research team later uncovered that up to 10 children could be taught by one teacher for one year with similar results. It was however fundamental that the teachers visit families, or encourage families to visit them, every 2 weeks, and that the Cognitively Orientated Curriculum was adhered to.

These findings inspired the development of Head Start in the USA and, later, Sure Start in the UK. However, Head Start has not shown the successes of the original High/Scope Study (Duncan and Magnuson, 2004), and, in the UK, Sure Start is inchoate and consequently long term outcomes cannot be known with any certainty. According to Steinhart, the smaller effectiveness of USA Head Start was down to teachers that:

- did not have bachelor's degrees;
- were not paid enough;
- did not teach the correct curriculum; and
- did only two home visits a year.

For Sure Start to be effective then, it would be advised to avoid these mistakes uncovered in USA Head Start programmes (cf. Duncan and Magnuson, 2004).

ii. Sure Start

Sure Start was established in the UK between 1999 and 2003 in areas of high deprivation. All children under 4 and their families living in the areas were targeted. In 2002, as part of Sure Start, Children's Centres were also established in order to provide more integrated care, education, family support, health services and childminder support.

The National Evaluation of Sure Start (Melhuish et al., 2008) shows that it did not adopt a prescribed curriculum but rather local areas were provided autonomy to adapt to local conditions, making overall evaluation of the programme almost impossible, and making the programme veer from the recommendations of the High/Scope study.

The National Evaluation looks at 9000 three-year olds and their families from 150 Sure Start areas initially studied when the children were 9 months old. These groups were compared to children of the same ages from the Millennium Cohort Study but who did not experience Sure Start (i.e. a control group, but controlled for over different temporal period). The evaluation found that Sure Start areas had number of benefits for children by age 3 and also a number of benefits for parenting. Unlike the first national evaluation of Sure Start, no adverse effects were uncovered (see also Melhuish et al., 2009).

Children in the Sure Start areas were:
- 50% more likely to have immunisations;
- 30% less likely to have an accident;
- exhibiting more positive behaviour and independence (as measured by parent self-report);
- receiving less problematic parenting (measured by Parenting Risk Index); and
- mothers reported using more services on offer.

As outlined in the first chapter, health issues, parenting and service use are deemed central factors that underlie NEET status. In the longer term then, Sure Start may impact on reducing the number of NEET. Many positive benefits reported in the National Evaluation are however drawn from parent self-report data, which is not a particularly reliable measure, and, in comparison to the High/Scope study, the time lapse between intervention and measurement of outcomes is too short to draw any reliable conclusions.

iii. General recommendations for successful early-age intervention

- Sure Start implementation varies from area to another. To effectively review local implementation in Essex, primary research needs to be carried out in Essex Sure Start Centres that compares their implementation to High/Scope study approaches and pilots a more centrally-driven and less flexible early-age intervention.

- The National Evaluation is silent about the proportion of parents that access Sure Start and also on attrition rates. Primary research needs to be carried out in Essex to identify who and who is not accessing services or dropping out of using the services, and why.

- In terms of educational attainment, early intervention is no panacea. The LCA shows that 60 per cent of individuals who become NEET achieved high or average Key Stage 1 and 2 test results but their educational attainment dropped off in following years at Key Stages 3 and 4. Increasing educational ability at pre-school age may not therefore result in good results at later stages for all 'at risk' groups.

- While the High/Scope studies illustrate a number of positive types of outcomes than simply educational attainment, as we have stated, low educational attainment is one of the key factors predicting NEET. Consequently, for a large proportion of young people at risk of becoming NEET, their needs might be addressed by later age interventions that are described in the next section.

c. PRIMARY SCHOOL INTERVENTIONS (5-11 YEARS)

This aspect of the review considers evidence from four main types of intervention identified in the literature for this period of young people's education: Children's Fund-style school club provision; Reading Recovery Interventions; Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for primary school-age children; and parenting programmes for their families.

i. The children's fund and school clubs

The Children's Fund was established in 2000 as part of government initiative to prevent social exclusion so as to aid the proposed outcomes of Every Child Matters (2003) and Every Child Matters: Next Steps (2004). It was implemented alongside the Local Network Fund for Children and Young People; Sure Start; and the Connexions Service. 'On Track to Prevent Offending' was incorporated into the Children's Fund in 2001.

The fund aimed to increase inter-agency cooperation and participation, and, in 2008, it targeted 5-13 year-olds that were deemed to be at risk of social exclusion in all 150 Local Authorities in England. The Fund was implemented via as 'risk framework' that aimed to identify individual, family and community levels where interventions should be placed[3]. Rather than establishing new services, interventions were adaptations of existing services, and their monitoring and re-implementation in light of this.

According to the National Evaluation of the Children's Fund (Edwards et al., 2006), the most common services funded by the Children's Fund were:

- 'safe spaces' through breakfast, homework and after-school clubs (23% of provision);
- education support (9%);
- child therapy, counselling or therapeutic play services (8%);
- sports provision (6%);
- participation/engagement schemes (10%); and
- individual help through mentoring

The predominant goal of the services was to increase child self-esteem – deemed to be most frequently generated by problems with bullying, racism, and literacy problems. There was however, a low take-up of the services with only 10 per cent of families surveyed using the programme. Of those using the services, they were mostly accessed by large families, single parents, private renters and those on benefits i.e. the most vulnerable. Breakfast and

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[3] The 'risk framework' was determined by the Identification, Referral and Tracking (IRT) System, introduced following the Victoria Climbie scandal 2000 in order better join-up separate child monitoring and intervention services.

homework clubs tended to be used by more disadvantaged families but after school clubs used more by better-off parents.

Parental education and family therapy were used - mostly through self-referral (68% of users of total service were self-referred, and 19% were referred by schools). Some surprising positive responses were uncovered for parenting training with many parents viewing it as having helped them to manage their child's behaviour (perhaps mostly those that had self-referred). Edwards et al. (2006) also found that parents who utilised school clubs were positive about their provision largely because it gave them a break from children in the knowledge that they would be secure in the clubs. This however meant that parents could then be bought into the programmes and accessed, and also that they were empowered by their involvement in decisions as to the best ways forward. There were also positive reports of bringing individuals with similar problems together such as families of disabled children or children in care.

The results generated by the evaluation are not however conclusive. Moreover, a rigorous evaluation of a policy that implemented longer opening hours for schools in the USA in the late 1990s found no positive results on educational attainment (Molnar et al, 1999). There were also a number of problems in adequately implementing Children's Fund provision. Edwards et al highlight many problems endemic with multi-agency working. Often provision was not 'joined-up'; existing targets and cultures of service providers lead to low flexibility; there was often no data sharing; service networks required considerable management to be fully joined-up; clubs were not always in partnership with schools; and, importantly, provision had to work with whole families to be effective (see also Morris and Barnes, 2008). Despite these issues, Children's Fund-style practices do provide clues into some possible routes of intervention that are discussed at the end of this section.

ii. Reading recovery intervention

'Perhaps the most significant predictor of attainment at secondary level is attainment at the previous level' (Strelitz, 2003: 67).

Evidence clearly indicates that, in general, children who struggle with school work at an early stage of their education tend to become disengaged at later stages, and this effect multiplies as they progress further in their educational careers. In particular, reading, if not tackled in primary school, goes on to alienate pupils later (McCrone and Morris, 2004). It may then be vital to tackle this early on in schooling.

Vellutino et al.'s (2004) study in USA shows that one-to-one reading teaching lessened poor literacy from 10 per cent in schools to only 1.5 per cent. One UK study (Burroughs-Lane, 2006) shows that poor readers were often left at the sidelines in schools and ignored. To counteract this, Burroughs-Lane advocates Reading Recovery Intervention that, in tests, led to gains of on average 20 months on a child's reading age.

iii. Therapeutic interventions

Another form of intervention in primary school years involves psychological support based mostly on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). Therapy at primary school age, if effective,

will save expenditure in the long term in terms of the drain on later resources of entrenched problematic behaviour (Romeo et al., 2006). Indeed, by age 21, those who have been NEET from 16-18 are more likely to be unemployed, earn less, suffer poor health and depression, (Young People Directorate, 2010). They thus generate considerable costs for Local Authorities.

Koegal et al.'s (2008) robust evaluation of the 'SNAP under 12 outreach project' in Canada, points to considerable effectiveness of CBT approaches, at least in the short to medium term. SNAP (Stop Now and Plan) focuses on children under 12 years old that are deemed at risk of 'conduct disorder' (which invariably affects their educational attainment). SNAP helps children and carers interrupt negative behaviour patterns and attempts to replace these with more positive behaviour. This is done over twelve 90 minute sessions provided to both children and their parents. SNAP also provides additional components based on children's needs which include: one-to-one family counselling; individual befriending for children that have no positive structured activities in their community; and academic tutoring for those falling behind in school work.

The evaluation followed up 80 participants each allocated to an experimental, control or matched group at 6 and 12 month follow-up intervals. The results were highly significant in reducing aggression and delinquent behaviour (as self-reported by parents), especially for boys. SNAP sessions for children were the primary cause of this reduction, although it worked less well for children under the age of 11, and may thus work better with Year 7 or 8 pupils. The effects of SNAP sessions on parenting were less conclusive because most parents did not attend all sessions. This demonstrates the importance of trying to better include parents in interventions for their children.

Despite the positive results from the SNAP study, the evaluations only ran to one year after therapy and it cannot be known if the effects were more enduring. Broader reviews of therapeutic intervention finds that evidence for their effectiveness is rather weak (Hayden, 2007), and consequently money may be better targeted more broadly at educational interventions. Indeed, Hayden (2007) argues that therapeutic approaches do not have as successful outcomes as providing adequate extra classroom teachers (see below). However, for children showing signs of some of the worst forms of behaviour problems, SNAP style CBT may be recommended. Indeed, a meta analysis[4] of 104 studies found that child social skills training were successful in 50 per cent of the studies but that cognitively-based programmes showed the most significant outcomes, although this worked best for children over 13 years old (Losel and Bellman, 2006). As such, social skills training is probably better suited to secondary school pupils.

iv. Parenting programmes

There is evidence that indicates parenting programmes could have significant implications on the number of young people becoming NEET. However, this evidence pertaining to the success of parenting programmes in changing child and parent behaviour is mixed (Farrington and Welsh, 2007; Long et al, 1994), most likely as a result of different types of programme philosophy and implementation differences. 'Parent Management Training' (Patterson, 1982),

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[4] Meta-analysis are systematic literature reviews that add together the results of all published robust studies undertaken on a single intervention in order to calculate a definitive result.

whereby parents are encouraged to use punishment and reward in a consistent manner, has however been shown by a meta-analysis review to lead to a 20 per cent reduction in child 'anti-social behaviour' (Farrington and Welsh, 2003). Gottfried et al. (2001) argue, however, that that beyond a certain point of encouragement, diminishing returns can set in i.e. too much goal driven expectations from parents can negatively affect pupils' intrinsic motivations for learning.

iv. General recommendations for successful primary school interventions

- Reports from parents using breakfast, homework and after-school clubs are overwhelmingly positive (Edwards et al, 2006). However, the up-take of these types of service was very low. To increase uptake, these programmes might be implemented by joined-up provision whereby parents accessing Sure Start or other local services are encouraged to access Children's Fund types of services. Drawing parents into the programmes could draw parents into cooperating with the kinds of parenting support and training that have shown to have some positive benefits for children's behaviour, and, perhaps, learning (see Farrington and Welsh, 2003).

- For parents of large families, even the respite provided by the baby sitting services of various out-of-hours school clubs could reduce stress levels of parents and thus lead to positive outcomes for their children.

- Much more needs to be done to access the hardest to reach groups. A 'one size fits all' joined up service may go some way to fixing this problem. This is discussed in section F below.

- The balance between 'thick' and 'thin' services needs to be readjusted. Most children receive 'quick and thin' services which do little to reduce poor attainment (Little and Axeford, 2004). The Children's Fund is a prime example of this, considering that it was operated for a limited number of years. Effective services need to be long-term and intensive, and there is a need to prioritise programmes locally via need and not by what services already exist.

- There is a large gap in interventions at primary school level. It should be considered however, that local authorities that pilot and effectively monitor small scale interventions with rigorous methodology can positive results to obtain funding from central and European governments (see Little and Axford, 2004).

- In this context, Reading Recovery Intervention might be a very successful intervention for ECC to pilot. It is advised that that is done in the first instance as a monitored pilot project tested against a control group. A matched group could also be assigned to the study where Classroom Assistants are trained in and carry out Reading Recovery Intervention. If positive results are generated, ECC may then be able to attract funding for more widespread implementation.

- CBT programmes for children demonstrating the worst kinds of conduct disorders, and which include their parents or carers, might also be piloted and monitored. Because of the short-term nature of current evaluations, we recommend that

experimental groups are monitored over a longer time period than one year. It might be especially valuable to uncover whether primary school/Year 6 age CBT programmes provide any resilience to the 'Key Stage 3 dip'.

d. SECONDARY SCHOOL INTERVENTION (11-16 YEARS)

A major factor associated with becoming NEET is poor school attainment (Meadows, 2001; Dolton et al, 1999). With each GCSE at C or above, the probability of young man being unemployed falls by 29 per cent (Stafford et al, 1999), and, regardless of GCSEs, those who find work early are more likely to stay in work than those that find work later on. Moreover, this process is reinforcing i.e. those that perform badly at school, leave early and are much less likely to find formal employment. This reinforces itself whereby if one has no job one month, they are much more likely than average to have no job the next month (Dolton et al, 1999).

The major backdrop to understanding low educational attainment in the literature is deprivation, yet 'The precise reasons why poverty is so strongly associated with lower levels of attainment remain unclear' (Darton and Strelitz, 2003: 66). However, data indicate clearly that deprivation and/or social class background impacts on school performance. For example, only 13 per cent of children from unskilled backgrounds attend university compared to 72 per cent of those from professional backgrounds (Strelitz, 2003), and the UK has one of the highest associations of social class with educational performance in Europe (Sylva et al., 2004). This indicates that social class factors impact on educational attainment in addition to deprivation itself. Here cultural factors about work and education and parenting methods and attitudes towards education associated with social class groups appears to have a powerful impact on educational attainment (see Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008a)

Schools can however, have a significant 'protective effect' upon risks derived from deprived and working class home environments. Broader research shows that schools can make up to 18 per cent difference to an individual's educational attainment (Lupton, 2006; Cassen. and Kingdon, 2007). However, in deprived areas, schools tend to perform poorly as a result of having less qualified teachers, high staff turnover, more supply teachers and teacher shortage, poor buildings, facilities and IT (Strelitz, 2003). Given the economic status of Tendring, it would be illuminating to compare the quality of resources of schools in this area to other, more successful, schools outside of the locality.

There are a number of reliable studies that point to ways in which secondary school provision can be significantly improved for pupils at risk of disengagement from education. In terms of the LCA, interventions at secondary school levels appear vital. Latent classes 1, 3 and 5 display a significant 'Key stage 3 dip'. Also, of course, secondary school interventions may help other groups to keep up with secondary school work.

i. Understanding the 'key stage 3 dip'

The evidence suggests that while interventions before secondary school-age can have long lasting positive effects, it is at the period between ages 11 to 14 (Key Stage 3 level), that the pathway to NEET status becomes entrenched. As demonstrated by the LCA, for a large

proportion of the Essex NEET groups (60%) there is a significant drop-off in educational attainment when they enter secondary school.

At this stage in their education, students go through a number of educational transfers and transitions (most notably linked to changing schools) including the onset of new educational networks, new curriculum subjects, new styles of teaching and different educational expectations. It is a period of flux when perhaps it is the last chance to effectively settle pupils onto a non-NEET pathway.

Some UK research suggests that dips may occur in primary level education between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 (for example Lewisham County Council, 2008), but the overwhelming evidence points to the two academic years following secondary school. This seems to be the case in a number of countries (see Whitby & Lord, 2006) as well as in England (Hayes & Clay, 2004; Smith, 2003). A range of attitudinal measures are presented in the literature demonstrate a significant increase in disengagement from formal education for this age group, with many pupils' motivation and enjoyment of education declining during secondary education (Lord and Johnson, 2005; Lord and Jones, 2006). This is particularly pronounced by Year 8 - the second year after transfer (see Suffolk LEA, 2002 & NFER in full 2005). Consequently, even if pupils do not show an initial school 'transfer dip', it may important to monitor their attitudes towards education in order to provide a foresight function for the beginning of potential future dips in educational achievement.

While there is controversy over whether the dip merely indicates a short-term disruption or signals a long term shift downwards to a new lower plateau (see Pepper, 2008), the literature is consistent on one aspect: between the ages of 11–14, the least progress is made by students. Explaining this dip, however, is no easy task given that the dip can occur at slightly different times, in different subjects, and for different types of pupils. While the literature sometimes acknowledges this heterogeneity, it has yet to be fully integrated into research designs that enable the issues to be rigorously analysed and requires further primary research.

Despite this, the literature focuses on an overlapping set of themes to explain the decline in aspirations and attainment at Key Stage 3, including:

- Students' perceived distance of compulsory secondary school leaving examinations at age 16;
- institutional effects - curriculum change, teacher/pupil relations, lack of short term expectations;
- parental effects; and
- peer effects – the new school class groups and peer networks

It is important to assess these themes and their implied hypotheses with reference to the few longitudinal studies in this field. This is because research needs to measure 'before secondary school' and 'after secondary school' effects. To this end, a number of studies have been highlighted as particularly useful: Chowdry et al. (2008); Gottfried et al. (2001); Rivers (2006); and Smyth et al. (2004).

The time gap

It has been hypothesised that Year 8 represents a 'nadir year' for pupils because there are no national tests to give them clear expectations of something to work towards, which may thus remove motivational incentives for some students. This stage of education could be represented as a period of 'educational limbo' for pupils where there are no immediate consequences for poor effort and attainment (Demetriou et al., 2000; Sharp, 1998). Yet this is a particular area where the evidence base is very murky. Indeed, some evidence from longitudinal research suggests that the opposite maybe true in terms of the absence of exams. Gottfried et al. (2001), for example, suggest that the *presence* of national assessment and examinations is a significant factor that predicts falling attainment. Specifically, exams may be a source of academic anxiety which may have negative effects on motivations to learn.

Institutional effects

This theme of academic anxiety is supported by another longitudinal study from Ireland. Smyth et al. (2004) argue that it is the need to adapt to a new institutional framework that often undermines student motivation and attainment. This 'period of adjustment' requires pupils to come to terms with a broader curriculum, a greater range of knowledge areas, and an increase and change in the organisation of curriculum subjects. Some of the literature also argues that it is important to understand changes in the teachers' role at this point because some teachers may focus on what is perceived to be more important work with other later, year groups (Demetriou et al., 2000; Galton et al., 2003).

This issue may directly or indirectly relate to another aspect affecting students following school transfer which is the change in the training and qualifications of teachers and, consequently, a change in teaching styles from primary to secondary education. A report from Australia, for example, provides some anecdotal evidence to suggest that teachers of students in the first year after transfer (ages 12 to13) did not build on the current stock of knowledge held by pupils. Instead, classes often repeated a lot of topics already taught in primary school (Whitby & Lord, 2006). This is supported by further analyses from the UK where there is evidence to suggest a mismatch exists between children's expectations and what they actually experience in the secondary school. More anecdotal UK evidence also points to a lack of challenge and repetition of school work (Lord and Jones, 2006).

These observations may correspond in particular to Essex LCA groups 1, 2, 3 and 5 that demonstrate above average or high levels of ability in Key stage 1 and 2, but appear to become disengaged and later perform very poorly in GCSE and become NEET. However, if this is the case, then we must also accept its corollary: that for some students arriving at secondary school, there is not enough challenge (Hayes and Clay, 2004 and Smyth et al., 2004). It is under such circumstances that researchers in the USA have found it fruitful to measure the variance in pupil engagement within and between classes and schools. The aim is to make sure that classes are sufficiently challenging for the vast majority if not for all.

Parental effects

As discussed above, another institutional effect is that of the family on child educational motivation and attainment. Two aspects are mostly considered in the literature: the parents' educational background, and the level and type of interaction that parents have with their child(ren). In terms of the former, Chowdry et al. (2008) produce a rigorous and interesting set of results. Specifically, parental educational background is strongly positively correlated

with teenagers' GCSE results, with mother's education playing a slightly larger role than the father's. A young person whose mother has a degree (NVQ Level 4/5) scores, on average, around 20 GCSE points higher at Key Stage 4 than someone whose mother has no educational qualifications. Similarly, a young person whose father has a degree scores, on average, 11 GCSE points higher at Key Stage 4 than someone whose father has no educational qualifications.

Is it important to note however that Chowdry et al.'s study shows that parental education is *not* strongly associated with progression from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4, suggesting that the gains (in terms of attainment) of having a more educated parent are 'fully captured' by age 14. Moreover, there are no clear relationships between parental education and the probability of being NEET at age 17, or between parental education and the probability of engaging in risky behaviours at age 16. Nonetheless, there is some evidence that mother's education is positively associated with the probability of participating in positive social activities at age 14.

Wing Chan and Koo (2010) take a different approach to understand the effects parents have on children by focusing on parenting styles. Using a data sample populated with 11 to 15 year olds, the researchers developed a typology of parental styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. They seek to understand the type of parents that adopt which types of parenting styles and the subsequently effect that has on a broad range of child outcomes such as: subjective well-being and self-esteem, health and risky behaviour, and school results and enrolment. The authors demonstrate that permissive and authoritarian styles of parenting both have a negative effect on the key child outcomes, and that the children seem to respond in a much more positive way to authoritative parental styles. As the authors claim:

> 'Authoritative parenting is associated with higher self-esteem and subjective well-being, and lower odds of smoking, getting involved in fights, or having friends who use drugs. As regards educational outcomes, where class origin and parental education are significant predictors, parenting style also has significant net associations'. (2010: 12)

Peer effects
The potential for peers to affect individual achievement is also a central factor to take into consideration. Indeed, specific mixtures of pupils in a classroom environment can have significant implications for a pupil's educational attainment and possibly their career and life pathways (Angrist and Lang, 2004; Cooley 2007; Epple et al, 2002; Fryer and Torelli 2005).

Several studies testify to the various positive and negative contingencies that peer groups can help create. Sage and Kindermann (1999) examined children's day-to-day interactions with fellow pupils and their teachers at the beginning of a school year. The results suggested that students who were highly motivated for classroom activities were likely to be members of peer groups who were (slightly) more motivated, and they were more likely to receive approval contingencies for their academic effort. Conversely, less motivated students were found to mix with slightly less motivated peer groups, and the only source of approval for these students' learning based activities was the teacher. Very similar results were found by Galbavy (2003) and Alison et al. (2007).

An important implication is that in an environment where attainment segregation takes place, some pupils in lower sets may respond positively to an environment of keen learners. The challenge is to identify those pupils who, for whatever reason, are struggling in terms of attainment levels, but may have the 'right' aptitude to adapt to a more intense learning group.

The rest of this section will outline possible policy interventions to address the issues associated with the Key Stage 3 dip.

ii. Improving standard education

Reviews of educational research in the USA suggest that schools with clear, fair and consistently enforced rules tend to have lower rates of pupil misbehaviour (Gottfredson, 2001; Herrenkhohl et al., 2001) which impacts on achievement and provide a basis for later behaviour in training or work. Generally, schools that administer high levels of punishment and low levels of praise tend to display the most pupil misbehaviour (see Rutter, et al., 1979), although it is not possible to disentangle whether this is an outcome of a cause of pupil misbehaviour (Farrington and Welsh, 2007). With respect to boys, Cassen and Kingdon (2007) argue that more masculine and informational reading materials for boys are necessary as is extra praise-based attention in class. They also claim that being treated as infants conflicts with boy's self-esteem and thus leads them to reject the formal educational curriculum.

Data from a longitudinal study in Ireland (Smyth et al. 2004) suggested that the type of interaction students have with teachers, and the types of school they attend, are the strongest influences on student achievement in their second year of secondary education (age 13- 14). Students that experience positive interaction with teachers hold a more positive self-image, both academic and social. The opposite was the case for students that experienced negative interaction with their teachers. These students were more likely to become disengaged from learning and school life; have lower academic aspirations; miss more school; and were more likely to leave school before or after the Junior Certificate (the compulsory school leaving certificate).

More generally, a number of reports identify the importance of a supportive school ethos. This includes pastoral support, for example to stop bullying or to support students at points of transfer (Wylie, 2004; Hall and Kennedy, 2006; and Smyth et al., 2004). This includes academic support in terms of the provision of extended learning times for (Hall and Kennedy, 2006 and Smyth et al., 2004), and support to encourage students to understand the importance of individual effort and perseverance (McDermott et al., 2001). Furthermore, a supportive school ethos could also include teacher support and the provision of continuing professional development for school staff (Hall and Kennedy, 2006; Smyth et al., 2004). Research also suggests that schools could reduce the occurrence of dips in performance through careful monitoring and identification of students who might be at risk (Hall and Kennedy, 2006; Gottfried et al., 2001).

In addition to encouraging a supportive culture in school and providing appropriate courses and curricula, the research suggests that certain pedagogies may help alleviate a dip. Some literature suggests encouraging student-centred teaching that meets the needs of all students.

This may encompass teaching and learning that is challenging, involves novelty and encourages autonomy (Gottfried et al., 2001; Hall and Kennedy, 2006). Pedagogies that encourage providing positive feedback (Rivers, 2006), and the recognition of students' learning, progress and achievement, may also guard against a dip in performance, particularly where there are year groups without tests or markers of progress, such as in Year 8 in England. This may be achieved through recognising students' learning in ways other than through extrinsic markers (see, for example, Queensland Government, 2003a; Gottfried et al., 2001).

An area for future research might also be to monitor teaching based on 'multiple intelligences' (Gardner and Hatch, 1989). Studies consistently show that low self esteem in relation to school achievement impacts strongly on educational attainment (Cassen and Kingdon, 2007). Teaching via multiple intelligences has been shown to increase self esteem (Gardener and Hatch, 1989) and may thus contribute to preventing some pupil's disengagement, especially if it is implemented before the Key Stage 3 dip onsets.

In addition to improving teaching methods, as a recent major Joseph Rowntree Report argues, '…additional expenditure above the mean level of £3,100 per student is associated with better performance by local authorities in reducing low achievement' (Cassen and Kingdon, 2007: 24). Indeed, those living in UK local authorities where less is spent per pupil on their education were also more likely to become unemployed (Dolton et al., 1999). The budgets supplied to schools and other educational services clearly have an impact on educational outcome and levels of unemployment. Clustering of extra school provision between schools could be also improve educational performance where schools are able to pool their needs and resources in order to get extra value out of their budgets (Little and Axford, 2004)

Money spent on education, although a significant factor in improving educational outcomes and lessening unemployment, is not however enough alone, but it needs to be effectively targeted. For example, Sarah Ross of Manchester Education Authority claims to have reduced the numbers of 16-18 year old NEET from 30 per cent in 2003 to 11 per cent in 2009 by targeting the worst secondary schools and the primary schools that feed these (Ross, 2010). Manchester also tackled 'priority groups' within NEET cohorts i.e. looked after children, those with Special educational needs, those in receipt of free school meals, an black and minority ethnic groups. 11 per cent is however, still an unacceptable number of NEET (well above 2010 central Government targets for example), and, at present, it cannot be known if Manchester is simply 'warehousing' these young people in education between the ages of 16-18.[5]

ii. Supplementary education

There is considerable evidence to suggest that smaller class sizes have significant impacts on improving educational outcomes. This is not only effective at secondary schools but also for primary and pre-school education. For example, primary schools in UK that now have smaller class sizes demonstrate improved performance for more disadvantaged groups and have began to narrow the social class gap in educational attainment (Strelitz, 2003)

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[5]The authors have arranged a visit in May to Manchester Education Authority to meet with Sarah Ross in order to explore this further.

The SAGE Programme (Molnar et al., 1999) implemented in Wisconsin in 1996/7 was a five year pilot project monitored by a robust experimental design method. It looked at four interventions targeted at low income pupils where spending totalled $2,000 per pupil:

- reducing pupil teacher ratio to 1/15 for primary school and first grade pupils (i.e. years 6-7). This was added to second grade pupils in 1997/8 (year 8);
- established 'lighted school houses' open early morning until late evening;
- developed rigorous curricula; and
- created a system of staff development and accountability.

Of the four interventions, only increasing the number of teachers per pupil showed positive results, but these results were very positive, showing an increase of 3-7 points on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, with teachers reporting better behaved and more engaged pupils.

The current architecture of schools precludes having class sizes of no more than 15 pupils. However, the SAGE programme authors argue that shared-space classrooms with temporary walls, or having two teachers in a classroom of 30 pupils, would generate similar positive outcomes. The consequence of more teachers-per child ratio is that teachers come to know pupils better and can more readily adapt their teaching to them, spending less time on disciplinary activities. The teachers in the SAGE study also said that having smaller class sizes made their jobs much more fulfilling and enjoyable. SAGE-style interventions could thus also help with teacher retention – which is a major issue for schools in deprived areas and which impacts negatively in pupil attainment (Strelitz, 2003).

The authors of the SAGE study argue that at the very least, 'floating teachers' could be employed by schools to assist with reading and mathematics classes. Likewise, McCrone and Morris (2004) cite an initiative in study in the UK where very able teachers took some of the most disruptive pupils out of their normal classes and into small specialised classes, reporting outstanding outcomes for both the pupils involved in the intervention and the pupils attending regular classes whose learning improved due to the reduction of numbers of disruptive pupils in their classes. Similarly, a robust study by Gottfredson et al. (2004) showed that 'high risk' students that were bought together into a supplementary class for two hours per day, demonstrated 12 per cent lower drop-out rates and a similar reduction in 'antisocial behaviour'.

There may have been value added to UK schools with the introduction of classroom assistants. We could not however find any studies conducted on this and it could be an area for further research and monitoring.

iii. Early vocational training

One study (McCrone et al, 2004) shows that vocational courses and work-related learning for poorly performing pupils before the age of 16 improves their motivation and their likelihood of continuing education after 16. This is particularly so when the pupils go out of school into colleges where they feel that they are treated like adults and where they tend to enjoy undertaking practical subjects. This may be a warning to recent Government initiatives to put college-based learning into schools as pupils may not benefit so much in this environment because they may feel that they are still being treated as school children.

McCrone et al (2004) advocate the Skill Force Programme as an alternative to GCSEs for disengaged pupils, yet they also state that these programmes may not show success in the long term because English and maths GCSEs are the 'gold standard' for employers. As a further example, Stafford et al. (1999) demonstrate that undertaking Government training schemes actually increases the chances of being unemployed because the schemes were seen as sources of failure by employees. The authors do however say that this may reflect the background of the types of individuals undertaking the schemes rather than the content of the schemes themselves. Yet, one only need take a look at the jobs advertised in Clacton's Connexions service to see that nearly all those jobs advertised required GCSE grade C or above in Maths and English.

Within Essex, Clay and Fox (2009) also report some success of early vocational training. They state that 'many examples were given of students who were close to permanent exclusion but who had grown in self-esteem and maturity over the life of the programme. The effects on the school as a whole were also identified with significantly less disruption to 'mainstream classes' and a clearer learning ethos in some lessons' (pp. 23-24). However, due to funding deficits, the programme had run into problems.

In this context, LCA types of analysis may be used to target whether pupils are engaged in supplementary education, vocational training or alternative education. Pupils that have special leaning difficulties, severe behavioural difficulties, or those that show persistent low attainment at Key Stage levels 1 and 2 might be directed to alternative and early vocational training. However, as mentioned by McCrone et al. (2004) and others, government vocational training can have adverse long-term employment outcomes. Vocational training then, might only be used with pupils when all other interventions have failed. We would also recommend that for vocational training to have a lasting effect, local employers need to bought close into the programmes and encouraged to be committed to providing full-time jobs to those that have undertaken the training.

iv. Alternative education

One study (Edwards et al., 2006) found that for black and minority ethnic children, in particular black boys, vocational schemes that emphasised getting them out of the city and into play or community-based drama or agricultural projects, show some successes. The boys themselves reported enjoying the scheme, and their parents reported that their children had become better behaved. Similar positive results are claimed by HIMMAT and UMMID (2008) alternative education projects in West Yorkshire. However a widespread review of the research evidence claims that wilderness and outward bounds activities do little to reduce unemployment and social exclusion later in life (Hayden, 2007).

Additionally, it needs to be taken into account that the effectiveness of alternative education programmes may not be a result of the content or environment of the programmes but rather a result of the intensive supervision that projects offer i.e. a significant reduction in pupil-staff ratios. In this respect it would be advisable to implement a pilot and monitoring study that compared the outcomes of alternative education against supplementary education. Supplementary education is likely to be much more cost effective and it may not have the

stigmatising effects of alternative education that may reduce levels of self-esteem and be undervalued by prospective employers.

v. Recommendations for successful secondary school interventions

- The more money that is provided for schools generally increases educational performance, although energetic and committed head teachers play a vital part in this, as does teacher retention and the employment of highly qualified teachers.

- Courses and curricula should be relevant and meaningful to students' interests (Gottfried et al., 2001). The 'Key Stage 3 dip' might be addressed by providing courses and curricula that are rigorous and have high expectations (Hall and Kennedy, 2006). It is important to note however that these levels of challenge must be appropriate to students' ability, as both too much and too little challenge are factors associated with a dip.

- Improving quality in early childhood education and recognising the importance of early foundations for learning could reduce the Key Stage 3 dip (Gottfried et al., 2001; Wylie, 2004). Part of the Key Stage 3 dip may then be attenuated by early-age interventions as described in the last section.

- Increased attention to reading and literacy is vitally important (Hall and Kennedy, 2006), and encouraging enjoyment of reading, using appropriate reading materials, could be crucial (Rivers, 2006), especially for boys.

- Supplementary education appears to be highly successful and should be used to address reading and literacy problems.

- UK Teachers have been criticised for teaching to the test (Demetriou et al., 2000; Galton et al., 2003) but, if the system is geared to constantly monitoring progress and judging teachers and institutions by outputs, it is hardly surprising that the focus is on ensuring that students produce the best results. This results in over-preparation for the tests in May of year 6, followed by a period with much less emphasis on the tested subjects. By September, when the children enter year 7, they have had four months of this post-test phase which is not adequate preparation for the start of secondary education. Many secondary school leaders believe that this is a major contributory factor in the so-called Key Stage 3 dip in performance.[6]

- Beware of vocational training. This should only be used as a last resort because of employer's negative associations with it. It remains vital to try to lift the GCSE results of pupils because these are the gold standard for both employers and further education establishments. The vast majority of school children are entirely capable of achieving good GCSE results if they receive the right kind of supplementary education (Hayward et al., 2008).

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[6] See http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2010/apr/06/nut-conference-sats-tests-blower

- For those groups that fall into LCA group 2, i.e. high early achievers whose grades drop off massively by GCSE, alternative and vocational educational schemes should be avoided at all costs. These groups have above-average levels of ability and their needs would be much better met by supplementary education.

- The LCA shows that in the Essex NEET cohort, gender differences are minimal with numbers being split also most 50/50 which is divergent to the evidence presented in the more general literature. A significant number of girls in the Essex NEET group become a teenage parent which, for obvious reasons, affects their educational attainment. It is however, problematic to disentangle cause from effect with respect to teenage pregnancy. Teen pregnancy may be an effect of disengagement from school rather than a cause. The interventions listed above that prevent to the onset of anti-school subcultures, could thus be effective for both boys and girls in Essex.

- We in particular recommend the piloting and monitoring of supplementary education programme, where local schools pool resources to employ one suitably qualified teacher to provide three 1.5 hour classes per day to a group of 15 students in each of the three schools.

E. DEALING WITH CURRENT NEET (16-25 YEARS)

This section looks at interventions that aim to provide routes into employment, education and training for those individuals that have are experiencing current NEET status. It will consider the role of aspirations in local areas; the Connexions Service; and issues related to teenage pregnancy, transport and housing.

i. Aspirations and area effects

Community factors have indirect effects upon low educational and occupational outcomes, partly through their underpinning of young people' aspirations. Aspirations filter to young people via the attitudes of parents and significant others. Parents' aspirations are the most important factor determining young people's aspirations, but this is overlaid by peer group aspirations by the age of 15, and teachers' expectations throughout schooling (Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008a). Yet there is a difference between low and no aspirations. Most young people, even those living in deprived areas, appear to have very realistic aspirations for the normality of happiness, family and regular employment (Hayward et al., 2008; Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; Whittaker, 2008).

The Social Exclusion Task Force (2008a) study into the impact of aspirations upon educational attainment shows that close knit communities with low population mobility and history of economic decline do however, impact strongly on young people's aspirations. Youth attitudes become locked in by close-knit, strongly tied, networks. Moreover, 'isolate' areas (like Tendring for example) tend to have the lowest levels of aspirations because of the local clustering of social networks. More expansive social networks, on the other hand, may provide inspiration, information and opportunity that are not available in isolate areas. Indeed, studies show that around 50 per cent of jobs are found through informal networks

(Granovetter, 1974; Comptroller and Auditor General, 2007), and this may be more so for less skilled jobs (Thiel, forthcoming). In such areas occupational success is associated with moving out of the area, and area-based stigma is felt by residents, which also contributes to their low aspiration (Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008a), and perhaps employment opportunity (cf. Gill, 1977)

The effects of local networks may have patricianly negative outcomes for young men. Some proportion of the LCA NEET group are young men from female headed households. Not withstanding the possible lack of male role models during their upbringing, the gendered nature of employment means that regular contact with fathers and uncles provides vital links into work for many disadvantaged young men (Thiel, forthcoming). Mentoring may provide a partial solution to this deficit in its ability to build broader 'bridging capital' (Coleman, 1988) and less localised social ties.

With respect to mentoring schemes for young offenders, Newburn and Shiner (2005) demonstrate some positive outcomes but only where the genders were matched, and DuBois et al.'s (2002) meta-analysis concludes that mentoring does tend to increase employment outcomes. We would add however, that the matching of social class background of mentors and mentored may increase the efficacy of mentoring. For example, professional mentors would be much less likely to able to link young people with no or little qualifications to employment than mentors who are in manual occupations or who run businesses that employ manual workers. Moreover, many disadvantaged young people are likely to have to have had significant contact with professionals (school teachers, social workers, medical professions etc) for many years but, because of the social network ties of these groups, they may not be at all helpful in helping young people into employment. A closer matching of social class backgrounds may also increase empathy and understanding between mentors and mentored.

Despite this, it needs to be noted that there simply are not enough jobs to cater for young school leavers. In 1975, 62 per cent of 16 year olds went straight into work, but in 1992 this was only 9 per cent. From the late 1990s, more than ¾ of young people stayed in education beyond 16. Consequently, there is little work for young people to do, and evidence shows that employers regularly prefer to employ older people with experience (Meadows, 2001). Helping NEET groups into work is likely thus to be an incredibly difficult undertaking, particularly in geographically ghettoised areas like Tendring where there is little local formal employment infrastructure. The key to helping these groups then, may be helping them into sustainable training that provides work later on, and by increasing their ability to and perceptions of travel through visiting schemes and grants for transport to work. However, the nature of training needs to be respected and valued by employers, unlike the government training schemes discussed above (Stafford et al, 1999).

ii. The connexions service

Launched by Tony Blair in 1999, Connexions was piloted in 2001, and extended to all England in 2003. It aims to join up various services including local education authorities, schools, colleges, the Leaning and Skills Council, Jobcentre Plus, the health service, and Youth Offending Teams. Coordination is driven by Personal Advisors employed to help 13-19 year olds, but the main focus has been to target young people in disadvantaged areas

Coles et al. (2004) analysed early implementation of connexions services in 2003-4, in 3 case study areas ('Midland', 'Metro' and 'Northern' Connexions). The authors uncover the eternal problems with multi-agency work with respect to lack of coordination, conflict between various agencies, and problems related to role specifications. The main issues were as follows:

- Lack of information sharing between the various agencies. Although the reason for this were often down to data protection problems with many partners not knowing which kinds of information they were able to share. Yet incompatible IT systems across the departments, poor staff, and high staff turn over often contributed to and compounded this. Moreover, the Identification, Referral and Tracking (ICT) system developed to aid collaboration between agencies was not working effectively.
- Inconsistency due to lack of cooperation.
- Lack of understanding about what each agency should be doing.
- Schools were continually shown to not cooperate with Connexions advisors.
- More generally, New Public Management performance indicators commonly lead to services focussing on 'outputs rather than outcomes' (Garland, 2001; Little and Axeford, 2004) thereby reducing service efficiency.

Despite these problems, Coles et al. do show that where Personal Advisors were interested, energetic and keen to do a good job, the outcomes could be very positive, especially when they Advisors were embedded in schools. Linking schools with Connexions advisors appears essential for effectiveness.

The Education Maintenance Allowance paid directly to young people aged 16-18 in education that are from households with an income of £32,400 or less, is likely to increase uptake for training and further education, but the allowance needs to be clearly marketed so that young people know what is on offer. In relation to what has been discussed above, many of these young people may be much better served in the long-term by re-taking GCSE exams than by vocational training – especially Government training schemes.

In relation to the multi-agency aspects of Connexions, Little and Axford (2004) state that clustering of agency assessments could also save time and money, and save some young people from being repeatedly assessed, which may alienate them. This not only applies to later interventions with current NEET groups but also in the earlier social work and therapeutic interventions discussed above. Little and Axford also state a 'no closed door policy' and 'one stop shops' are also effective in coordinating interventions. They also recommend using Family Liaison Officers for outreach services rather than social service agencies who may not be trusted by service users, and that more emphasis needs to be put in purposeful outreach for the hard to find.

As Connexions services vary from area to area it was not possible to evaluate the effectiveness of Essex Connexions. We recommend that primary research is conducted in Essex Connexions Centres in order to uncover the specific details of their efficiency. ECC has conducted primary research into this and have demonstrated considerable success (Baxter, 2007). However the ECC report does not address issues underlying the large proportions of NEET groups that are not helped into EET by Essex Connexions services, and thus further research is necessary.

iii. Teenage pregnancy

The UK has highest rates of teenage pregnancies in Western Europe (Utting, 2003), and a number of the Essex 'NEET areas' show much higher rates than England's as whole (Office for National Statistics, 2008). Longitudinal research (Kiernan, 2003) suggests that investment in educational opportunities is at least as effective in reducing teenage pregnancy as is teaching about contraception. Keirnan also shows that the disadvantage of associated with teenage pregnancy (i.e. poverty) also applies also to those who become parents in early 20s. Polices that attempt to get young parents into work need then to be directed at broader age range than only teenagers.

One rigorous evaluation of a successful programme aimed at helping current teenage mothers suggested that when more experienced mothers were recruited to help the less experienced, levels of child maltreatment were reduced significantly (Johnson et al., 1993). The place to start such programmes would be in Sure Start centres.

iv. Transport

As stated above, one way in which the geographic range of young people living in geographically ghettoised areas may be increased is through better access to transport. Meadows (2001) analysis of the quantitative data on young disadvantaged people shows that having a driving licence doubled the probability of their being in employment. While it cannot be known if having a driving licence or, the factors that lead one to have a driving licence (such as parental support), leads an individual into employment, this observation opens up a possible pilot and monitoring intervention.

Driving lessons could be offered to current NEET (provided by a suitably trained instructor). This could have a number of positive outcomes including generating interest in learning, increasing self-esteem, pulling 'hidden NEET' groups into intervention programmes, and, on passing the test, may give them more impetus to find work in order to buy a vehicle. Such a scheme may be particularly powerful in an 'isolate' area like Tendering.

v. Housing

Since the late 1990s there has been a massive increase in number of people living in temporary accommodation (Best, 2003), and data clearly shows that overcrowding and moving house has adverse effects on young people (see section 1.ii above). This issue may be particularly pertinent for an area like Tendering that contains a high number of temporary accommodation. Better and more stable housing provision is likely to have positive outcomes on young people's educational performance.

vi. Recommendations for successful interventions for current NEETs

- Primary research needs to conducted with Essex Connexions services in order to identify multi-agency coordination problems and to measure the extent to which Personal Advisors engage with schools, colleges and employers, and the barriers that inhibit this.

- Piloting and monitoring of matched mentor schemes for NEETs and teenage mothers should be conducted and compared to control groups with no mentor, and matched groups using non-matched mentors.

- A pilot intervention to teach a small NEET group to drive, and a monitoring experimental design study comparing them to a control groups might be conducted. If the scheme is found to be successful, ECC could apply for extra funding to roll out the programme more broadly.

F. WORKLESS HOUSEHOLDS

Evidence shows that people in workless households tend to not engage in mainstream employment programs, and where whole household is out of work, this prevents any individuals moving into employment because of benefit traps and a dearth of role models and employment networks (Comptroller and Auditor General, 2007). These issues consequently have a significant impact on young people becoming NEET. Young people growing up in working households are much more likely to become employed than those from workless households. Indeed, even for those growing up single parent families, if that parent works, their children are twice as likely to not be unemployed in later life (Cusworth et al., 2009). Encouraging parents into work may then be a way in which to prevent some young people becoming NEET.

Main background factors associated with people in workless households (Comptroller and Auditor General, 2007) are:

- low skills;
- living in social housing;
- poor health;
- long-term unemployment;
- being a carer;
- low motivation and aspiration;
- localised social networks;
- language barriers;
- few available jobs,
- no transport;
- discrimination; and
- people tend to partner with those who are like themselves which increases worklessness risk factors within a household.

The evidence also shows that workless households are concentrated in particular areas suffering multiple disadvantage. In these areas, innovative outreach services maybe required to draw people in. The New Deal for example, aims to draws into work those claiming Job Seekers Allowance. Yet this effectively excludes those NEET groups under the age of 18 who are not entitled to benefits.

i. Interventions to break the cycle of worklessness

In order to increase up-take of interventions to address family worklessness, a Comptroller and Auditor General report (2007) advocates conjoining Job Centre Plus with Sure Start, and for outreach workers to be employed to literally spend time knocking on people's doors. The report also suggests that localised approaches are necessary to tackle multiple problems found in many workless families, and that support needs to be provided to move people from one stage of unemployment and employment to the next. For the long-term unemployed for example, it is not effective to try to plunge them straight into work but they should be gradually coached and immersed into employment. Performance indicators that drive some services to get people into full-time work may then have negative effects on some of the long-term unemployed and be counter-productive.

Many workless individuals require flexible working arrangements because of other potential responsibilities of, for example, the disabled, carers or parents. Employers thus need to be encouraged to be flexible (Comptroller and Auditor General, 2007). One scheme implemented in Tower Hamlets and Newham in 2006 is reported to have been very effective in introducing the long-term unemployed into work. The 'Slivers of Time' scheme increases access to work through using a highly flexible on-line marketplace that provides temporary jobs, like leafleting or stewarding for example, for those unable to work full-time. Potential workers list in an online diary when they are available for work, the kinds of work they are able to do and how far they are willing to travel. Employers then use the on-line diaries to determine suitable workers who they can immediately hire. Following the work, employers fill in an online time sheet and reference. In the East London pilots, many people who had not worked for considerable periods began work, and started built up references and confidence. The scheme was also liked by employers who were reported to have problems hiring temporary workers.

Many workless people have bad experiences of education, and they also need, to be encouraged into this gradually. Training programmes for the workless also need to be flexible whereby:
* training is delivered at convenient times in convenient places;
* can be started at any point in year;
* provides courses in short bursts;
* includes embedded support such as childcare; and
* utilises 'taster courses' to build confidence (Comptroller and Auditor General, 2007).

Encouraging part-time work may be an effective stepping stone into full-time employment, especially for young people under 18 years old who will not face benefit traps. For individuals aged over 18, the benefit system needs to be more flexible in order to enable people to and part-time and to allow them easier access in and out of temporary work

It should be considered however, that individuals in workless households are likely to work, but not in the formal economy (Macdonald and Marsh, 2005). Young parents work to raise their children, and research shows that even the most deprived young men do 'cash in hand' work, which prevents their total exclusion from employment (Cartmel and Furlong, 2000; Lloyd, 1999). However, in doing this, young people are also kept out of training and mainstream employment which is likely to impact on long-term outcomes.

In order to increase up-take of services, The Social Exclusion Task Force (2008b) suggest a need for a 'no wrong door' policy that integrates and joins-up adult and children's services around the needs of whole families. A £16m pathfinder programme running for three years from April 2008 and building on investment in Sure Start centres, has been introduced but this must be applied for by local councils. The problem however, is that families with entrenched problems tend to be wary of services and often do not attend programmes. These families need considerable encouragement to access the programmes.

The Task Force report contains however, some innovative and apparently effective suggestions to increase service up-take for families. One of these is the Family Nurse Partnership whereby a single dedicated family nurse works with the most 'at risk' parents during their pregnancy and beyond into the child's early years. This offers a way in which to build trust with parents that may be alienated from social services and helps them to become more effective parents. The partnership has been operated in the USA for almost 30 years and has demonstrated impressive results (see Calonge, 2005; Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008a). The Task Force report further suggests that 'family risk' should be assessed using the Common Assessment Framework, rather than being based on the child only. Because of the problems in connecting up multi-agency provision, the report also advocates clear accountability and leadership in the partnerships.

ii. Recommendations for successful interventions for workless families

- Piloting a 'Slivers of Time' scheme might be a very effective in drawing the long-term unemployed and young people NEET into work. This could be organised by Job Centre Plus and Connexions. The benefits system of course needs to be flexible enough to allow people to do temporary work, although this would not be an issue for most 16-18 year old people NEET**.**

- It is recommended that ECC apply for central government funding for the pathfinder programmes that aim to increase family participation in services. This could be used to fund innovative out-reach work for families.

- Prevention is much more cost effective than cure. In this respect it is important to try to access soon-to-be parents in order to draw them into services early. Family nurse programmes have been shown to be effective in doing this, and they should be linked into Sure Start programmes, and to later primary school-based monitoring and intervention in order to provide continuity of service.

3. CONCLUSION: THE NECESSITY OF FUTURE RESEARCH

The review has outlined a number of areas for potential policy interventions and areas for future research into the processes involved in becoming NEET. There is clearly a dearth of adequate empirical evidence available to ground policy interventions, and most research fails to address the risk factors that inhibit some young people's effective transition from school into further education, training and employment. There is also an insufficient focus on more holistic interventions to support various 'at risk' groups across their transitions from different forms of schooling and into early adulthood. There have been some recent movement towards more 'holistic' policy interventions (for example, Integrated Community Schools, Get Ready for Work and the Careers Scotland key worker service) but the longer-term impact of these has yet to be seen. Indeed, the lack of long term monitoring of policy interventions is a serious hindrance to evaluating the best interventions to prevent young people becoming NEET. In order to adequately understand why some people do become NEET, and to comprehend effective policy solutions, further research and monitoring is necessary. In this vein we suggest that:

- Ad-hoc focus group work and other related consultancy work ceases. Resources are obviously very limited and any new research must represent 'value for money' in terms of (a) adding new knowledge and (b) being part of a wider research programme whereby the results can be triangulated with other evidence being generated.
- To this end, we propose a two-day workshop over the summer of 2010 to discuss the methodological requirements for carrying this research agenda forward.

Becoming more sensitive to methodological concerns is the first step in improving the evidence base. It is clear that all stakeholders involved are a long way away from understanding the various pathways to NEET status. We know very little about the *relative* importance of social, economic, educational and psychological factors that shape the lives of potential NEET groups in Essex or how these factors cluster to create typologies of potential NEET groups. This creates a knowledge gap along various dimensions:

- We know that deprivation and social class are important but as yet we do not understand the mechanisms by which both affect the probability of a child following a NEET pathway.

- We know that the local area and a child's home life affect the probability of following a NEET pathway. Within this research area, data and analyses do indicate how environmental factors shape attitudes and behaviour. Nonetheless, a lot more data needs to be collected on child perceptions of parental and teacher interactions.

- We also know that family and peer networks shape children's attitudes and behaviour, and that teachers can often play a pivotal role in increasing engagement in education. It is this research area that is most data deprived.

These are serious methodological concerns that reinforce the need for longitudinal analyses of school children focussing on their engagement with education and their attitudes and

aspirations. This should be complimented by focus group work to tease out further issues relating to children's home and school lives. This will enable us to implement a long-term research programme that has the capacity to generate results from which reliable inferences can be made.

From our review of various interventions, we suggest that the most promising and cost-effective strategies over the medium to long-term requires local and central governments to engage in longer-term thinking and an incremental, methodologically robust, approach to building interventions. In this vein we suggest the piloting and monitoring of four interventions that have been found to produce the most promising results and cost-effectiveness over the medium to long-term:

- An Early-age intervention pilot, which is implemented and organised via the tenets of successful early-age intervention programmes.
- A supplementary education pilot, where local schools pool resources to employ one suitably qualified teacher to provide three 1.5 hour classes per day to a group of 15 students in each of the three schools.
- A supplementary education pilot, where two teachers share a single classroom to teach literacy and numeracy to students that are falling behind.
- A dedicated outreach programme based in 'one stop shops' that target workless families and strive to join-up, in a holistic manner, the various services and interventions aimed at workless families.

Each of these programmes would be monitored by the research team over a long to medium-term period and compared against a non-intervention control group. Positive results could then be used to generate and target funding for both further research and a broader roll-out of the most successful interventions.

As the research and evidence on the processes and factors involved in becoming NEET are not clear, and because interventions are often contingent on local, on-the-ground, implementation issues, the research team should initially conduct a more in-depth quantitative analysis of ECC data on schooling and educational outcomes, and a small-scale qualitative scoping project with service providers and users in Essex. This would enable us to better understand the issues and processes underlying the pathways towards becoming NEET, and the local organisational and implementation issues, which would provide the basis for optimal implementation of the pilot studies.

It should be noted that the Department of Sociology and the Institute of Social and Economic Research at the University of Essex are ranked by the UK Research Assessment Exercise (the 'gold standard' in academic quality rankings) as the foremost centres of excellence in social research in the UK, with an international reputation for outstanding research. The research team is thus uniquely placed to work with ECC on the issues surrounding the 'NEET problem'. The team is able to combine robust cutting-edge multi-method research strategies and with their access to the expertise of colleagues working the centres to produce the highest quality research and evaluation for ECC.

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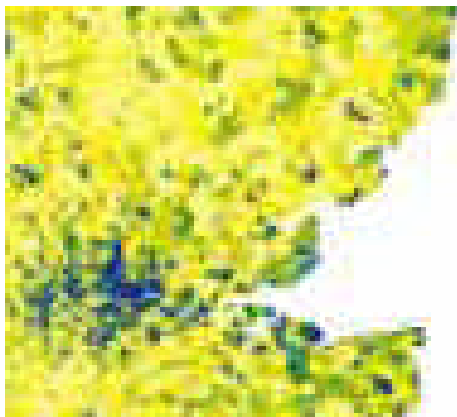
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

a. Maps to illustrate different relationships between worklessness and qualifications in the South East England. Reproduced from Comptroller and Auditor General, 2007.

1. Percentage of adults with no or low qualifications (blue = low)
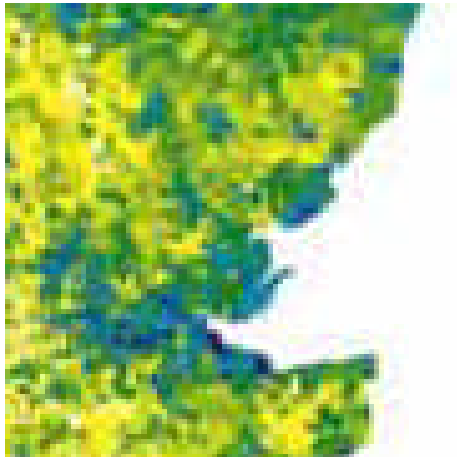
2. **Workless population as a percentage of working age population** (blue=high)

APPENDIX B: Latent class groups

Latent Class One
Gender: this group is exclusively female
Social problems: it includes all the possible females who have experienced homelessness, time in care, are registered as a youth offender, and have had to move school once. It also contains over a third of those who are a parent/pregnant. This group also contains the females most likely to experience more than one of the aforementioned issues.
Education: This group performs average at KS1 level, slightly worse at the KS2 level, and ultimately are in the bottom quartile at GCSE level.
Deprivation: This group demonstrates the highest level of deprivation.

Latent Class Two
Gender: this group is perfectly balanced between males and females
Social problems: this group demonstrates no social problems and is the only group to contain those that are registered as 'gifted and talented'. It also contains some youth offenders.
Education: This group has the highest attainment scores at KS1, KS2 and GCSE level.
Deprivation: This group demonstrates the lowest level of deprivation.

Latent Class Three
Gender: this group is a mix of males and females, with a bias towards males.
Social problems: this group demonstrates no social problems
Education: This group has average attainment scores at KS1 and KS2 but has low attainment at GCSE level.
Deprivation: This group demonstrates average levels of deprivation for NEETs

Latent Class Four
Gender: this group is exclusively male
Social problems: it includes some males who had to move school once.
Education: This group has the lowest attainment scores at KS1, KS2 and GCSE level.
Deprivation: This group demonstrates a high level of deprivation.

Latent Class Five
Gender: this group is exclusively female
Social problems: this group contains females with no recorded social problems but does contain a significant number of females that are a parent/pregnant
Education: This group has above average attainment scores at KS1, average KS2 attainment and finally low attainment at GCSE level.
Deprivation: This group demonstrates a very high level of deprivation

Table 1: Results of LCA

			Latent Class Number			
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*
<u>Variable name</u>						
Gender	Female	Mixed	Mixed (.39/.61)	Male	Female	Female
Homeless	0.20	No	No	No	No	No
In care	0.20	No	No	No	No	No
Substance	0.22	No	No	No	No	No
Youth Offender	0.20	0.13	No	No	No	No
Carer	No	No	No	No	No	No
Gifted & Talented	No	0.15	No	No	No	No
Moved school	0.48	No	No	0.10	No	No
Parent	0.54	No	No	No	0.54	0.18
GCSE	Bottom quartile (.95)	Mid quartiles (.34 each)	Bottom quartiles (.54 & .36)	Bottom quartile (.95)	Bottom quartiles (.67 & .26)	Bottom quartile (.92)
KS2	2nd quartile (.57)	Top quartile (.70)	2nd quartile (.73)	Bottom quartile (.85)	2nd quartile (.71)	Bottom quartile (.92)
KS1	Middle quartiles (.37 each)	Top quartile (.60)	Mid quartiles (.48 & .28)	Bottom quartile (.91)	Mid quartiles (.28 & .38)	Bottom quartile (.80)
Deprivation	Top quartile (.67)	Mid quartiles (.27 each)	Lower, middle and top quartiles (.34, .28 & .39)	Top quartiles (.28 & .50)	Top quartiles (.35 & .57)	Top quartiles (.32 & .44)
N	30	197	592	393	87	238
%	2	13	39	25	6	15

N = 1537

Entropy value = 0.81 (81% uniquely classified case