

PREVENTION OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

English National Report



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PREVENTION OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING REPORT ON THE NATIONAL SITUATION

UNITED KINGDOM

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Abstract

The first chapter of the report provides a description of the English national education system.

The second chapter focus on the main national trends.

The third one on the main reasons and causes for leaving education.

The fourth and fifth chapters analyze the national policies implemented for the prevention of early school leaving and the bodies in charge.

The sixth and seventh chapters describe selected initiatives carried out at national level to prevent early school leaving, among them some best practices were identified in chapter eight.

The ninth chapter describes case studies of students.

Chapter ten and eleven provide the conclusions and recommendations.

1) Introduction to the National Situation – the National Education System

Compulsory School Age¹

In the UK a child becomes of compulsory school age when he or she reaches the age of five and must start school in the term following his or her fifth birthday. Compulsory school age ceases on the last Friday in June in the school year in which the child reaches the age of 16.

Parents of children of compulsory school age (5 to 16) are required to ensure that they receive a suitable education by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Failure to comply with this duty can lead to prosecution.

Schools are required to take attendance registers twice a day. Where a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, schools have to indicate on their register whether the absence is authorised by the school or unauthorised. Local Authorities (LAs) are responsible in law for making sure that pupils attend school.

Under section 47 of the Education Act 1997 LAs must make arrangements for the provision of suitable education at schools or otherwise for children of compulsory school age who might not receive a suitable education for reasons such as illness or exclusion.

Types of School

The main categories of school are:

- Local Authority maintained schools
- Independent (fee paying) schools

Local Authority schools are divided into:

- **Foundation** – land and buildings owned by the Governing Body, who are also responsible for running the school and employing staff, but the LA funds the school. Admissions are determined by the Governing Body in consultation with the LA
- **Community** – LA owns the land and buildings, employs staff and funds the school, but the governing body is responsible for running the school. Admissions are determined by the LA

- **Voluntary aided** – usually called religious or faith schools, land and buildings normally owned by a charity, the school is partly funded by the LA, partly by the Governing Body and partly by the charity. The Governing Body is responsible for running the school and employs the staff and admissions are determined by the Governors in consultation with the LA and other relevant schools in the area
- **Voluntary Controlled** – can also be called a religious or faith school, land and buildings owned by a charity, the charity appoints some members of the Governing Body but the LA is responsible for running the school and employing staff.

In all of the above schools pupils have to follow the National Curriculum. Budgets are delegated to the school via the LA and the Governing Body is responsible *and accountable* for determining budget allocation and financial control / management linked to the School Development Plan. *School Governors are all volunteers and do not receive remuneration.*

Independent Schools

- The Governing Body is responsible for the day to day running of the school
- The school is funded by fees paid by parents and sometimes charitable trust funds
- The Headteacher, with the backing of the Governing body, employs the staff
- Pupils do not have to follow the national curriculum

City Technology Colleges

- These are independent non-fee paying schools and are situated in urban areas
- The college is run in accordance with an agreement between the company that owns it and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)
- The DCSF and commercial sponsors fund the college
- The Governing Body employs staff
- The pupils follow a curriculum similar to the National Curriculum, with particular emphasis on technology and practical skills

City Academies

- These are independently-managed, all ability schools
- They are set up in disadvantaged areas by sponsors from business, charities etc. in partnership with the DCSF and LAs
- The DCSF funds the running costs
- The Governing Bodies employs the staff
- The pupils do not have to follow the National Curriculum

For further information please use the following link

http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/index/family_parent/education/types_of_school.htm#Types_of_school

National Curriculum

The National Curriculum is a statutory requirement set by the UK government and is very specific on which subjects must be studied and by which age group.

All students must study English, Mathematics, Science and Physical Education up to the age of 16. There is

also a requirement for students 14-16 to study Religious Education, Careers Education, Sex Education, Citizenship and 'Work Related Learning'.

Additionally students can select from 'Option Subjects' such as Design & Technology; ICT; History; Geography; Modern Foreign Languages; Art and Design; Music.

Also, it is a requirement of the National Curriculum that teachers have regard to the three principles considered essential for a more inclusive curriculum:

- setting suitable learning challenges
- responding to pupil's diverse needs
- overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of students.

For further information about the National Curriculum please use the following link

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/atoz/n/nationalcurriculum/>

Main Qualifications studied

General Certificate of Secondary Education and A-Level

The General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) is the name of the most common academic qualifications taken / studied by secondary school students between the ages of 14-16 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

GCSE courses are taken in a variety of subjects, which are usually chosen by the students themselves in Year 9 (aged 13-14) and study of the subject begins at the start of year 10 (ages 14-15).

Success is not dependant entirely on a final examination and for most courses to obtain the qualification also depends on a course work element. Coursework can contribute anything from 20-100% of a student's final grade, with the more practical subjects having a heavier coursework element.

Particular importance is placed on English and Mathematics and many students who fail to get a C grade in these subjects will retake the qualification at a later date. Most universities require a C or better in these subjects.

For further information about GCSE, including a full range of courses please use the following links:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GCSE>

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/QualificationsExplained/DG_10039024?cids=Google_PP_C&cre=Education_Learning_Franchise

First introduced in 1951 the A-Level, short for Advanced Level, is a General Certificate of Education qualification in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, usually taken by students during the optional final two years of secondary school (Years 12 & 13 when aged 17 & 18), commonly called the sixth form. This qualification is recognised around the world and is often used as an entrance qualification for university.

For further information about A -Level qualifications, including criticism of the qualification

(for which average grades have been increasing steadily over the last 25 years) please use the following links:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_level

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/QualificationsExplained/DG_10039018

In addition to GCSE and A-Level courses the other main qualifications studied are:

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ)

NVQs are vocational awards achieved through assessment and training. They are practical qualifications based on being able to do a job. There are five levels of NVQ ranging from Level 1, which focuses on basic work activities, to Level 5 for senior management.

NVQs do have approximate academic equivalents e.g. NVQ Level 1 is equivalent to three to four GCSEs at grades D-E; NVQ Level 2 is equivalent to five GCSEs at grades A* - C, or a BTEC First Diploma; NVQ Level 3 is equivalent to two or more A – Levels or a BTEC Ordinary National Diploma;

For further information about NVQ qualifications, please use the following links:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NVQ>

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/QualificationsExplained/DG_10039029

BTEC awards (Business & Technician Education Council)

BTEC qualifications are also undertaken in vocational subjects ranging from Business to Animal Care. They also have an equivalence to other qualifications such as the GCSE and A Level, but a particular difference is that they tend to be based on practical work or coursework rather than examinations. e.g. BTEC Introductory Certificate is roughly equivalent to 2 GCSEs at D-E grades; BTEC First Diploma is roughly equivalent to 4 GCSEs at A* - C grades; BTEC National Certificate Level 3 is equivalent to 2 'A' – Levels

For further information about BTEC qualifications, please use the following links:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BTEC>

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/QualificationsExplained/DG_10039020

2) Main National Trends

Published UK statistics on the number of 14-19 year old students who are considered a 'drop out' have proved impossible to obtain. This difficulty was recognised in a report produced by researchers from Lancaster University in 2002 - 'Nationally there is little information available on what children missing from school are doing and the factors contributing to children disappearing from educational rolls'² At the time, in 2002, the report estimated that 'there are some 10,000 children missing from the school system at any one time (Ofsted 2003)'

This lack of statistics may be partly because when students stop attending secondary school, before the end of their compulsory schooling at the age of 16, other strategies are implemented which means officially and statistically their education continues, but in a different format, e.g. Elective Home Education (EHE - see section 4 below).

Another reason may be because resources to identify, locate and then provide appropriate support to encourage these students back into education are insufficient.

Having said that, there is some evidence that there is a 'drop out' problem in the UK. Figures quoted in an article in the Guardian newspaper from the 6th May 2007, headed '**Revealed: Britain's 100,000 'invisible' teenage drop outs**' are:

*'Last year 15,000 children in their GCSE year were missing from school registers.
Nearly 6,000 of them who were 14 in 2005 had 'disappeared' within a year.
When it came to exams, more than 70,000 pupils who should have been taking them did not turn up.
Twenty thousand pupils did not sit GCSE maths and 26,700 missed out on English'*

For the full article please use the following link:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2007/may/06/children.politics>

On a similar theme from a newspaper article headed 'We must bridge the learning gap', dated 10th May 2007 in the Telegraph suggested that;

'The figures on truancy and exclusion rates reflect the problem. Just three per cent of pupils account for 50 per cent of school days missed. Over 11,000 pupils were suspended more than five times in the same year. Persistent truants are six times more likely not to gain any GCSEs whatsoever, while two-fifths of boys in young offender institutions reported that they played truant every day'

For the full article please use the following link:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/05/08/nschools308.xml>

This is not to say that no official absence statistics are available and the latest figures for students, within the compulsory school age range, relate to the Autumn term 2006 and Spring term 2007. Across these two terms there were 204,810 persistent absentees (PAs) in maintained secondary schools (6.9% of pupil enrolments), where a Persistent Absentee (PA) is defined as having more than 63 sessions of absence during the year. (typically they are absent for more than 20% of the time)

The occurrence of PAs was higher amongst pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals (FSM). In 2006/07, some 9% of pupils who were known to be eligible for FSMs were PAs, compared to around 3% for the rest of the school population.

In 2006/07 some 4.2% of girls in primary, secondary and special schools were PAs, this is slightly higher than the proportion that were boys.

The overall absence rate for PAs is 35.07%, which is over five times higher than the rate for all pupils.

The percentage of PAs increases as pupils progress through school. The highest percentage of PAs is in national curriculum year group 11 (the last year of compulsory education)

The percentage of PAs was worst for the 'Traveller of Irish Heritage' (almost 42% of all 'Traveller of Irish Heritage' children were PAs; Gypsy/Roma (31%); The percentage of PAs for Minority Ethnic pupils was significantly below the rate for White British pupils.

For the full statistical reports and the source of the above figures please use the following links.

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000756/SFR36-2007.pdf>

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000775/SFR05-2008-rev.pdf>

Turning to students ages 16-18, UK statistics are in the form of young people who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) or Not in any Education or Training (NET)

Latest figures³ suggest that in the UK at the end of 2006 there were 206,000, 16-18 year olds falling into the NEET category.

The proportion of 16-18 year olds in education and training was 77.3% at the end of 2006, an increase from 76.8% at the end of 2005, but a decrease from 77.9% at the end of 1994. The total number of 16-18 year olds in education and training increased by 15,500 to 1.55million at the end of 2006, the highest number ever.

The proportion of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training decreased from 10.9% at the end of 2005 to 10.3% at the end of 2006

A key aspect of concern about 14-19 year olds is their level of functional skills in English, Maths and ICT. This is particularly relevant among the NEET group, which has a high proportion of young people with poor literacy and numeracy skills:⁴

- 23% of low achievers (young people completing Year 11 with less than five GCSEs grade D G) are NEET at 16
- 1% of 16-year olds who attained at least five GCSEs grade A* to C are NEET
- 16-19 year olds with learning difficulties are twice as likely to be NEET as their peers

There are regional variances, NEET rates tend to be lower in the South East and higher in the North East of the country⁵.

Also, there are differences between male and females, NET figures are

Males 2005 24.9%; 2006 provisional 24.5%
Females 2005 21.4%; 2006 provisional 22.7%

The only local information I have been able to obtain has come from 'Connexions' (see section 4):

Currently there are 20,891 young people aged thirteen to 16 year olds in Derbyshire and of these 156 (0.75%) are not on a school roll. In Long Eaton, which is where our college is situated, there are 1,441 of whom 25 (1.73%) are not on a school roll⁶.

The percentage of pupils that leave Derbyshire schools without any qualifications, from the LA:

Year	% Pupils without Qualifications
2007	1.3%
2006	1.7%
2005	2.1%
2004	2.9%
2003	3.9%

The *Leich Review of Skills* published in December 2006, projects a sharp decline in low skilled jobs up to 2020 whilst the importance of high-tech jobs increases, and anticipates that by 2020 there will only be around 600,000 jobs in the UK undertaken by those without qualifications, compared to around 3.2 million such jobs now. With a participation rate of 77% of 17 year olds in education or work based learning, the publication cites data placing the UK 24th out of 30 OECD countries on this measure.⁷

Between 1984 and 2004 the number of workers in elementary and low skilled occupations in the UK fell by a quarter. Over the same period the number of employees in professional, associated professional and managerial roles increased by 35%.

Looking forward to 2014, the number of people working in the lower skilled occupations is projected to fall by almost 20% while the number in the higher skilled occupations is expected to rise by almost 10%. We no longer have an economy where a third of school leavers can find a low skilled job in the manufacturing sector⁸.

Despite this trend and potential lack of opportunity, those achieving less than five grades at GCSE are six times as likely to drop out of education at 16 than those who achieve five or more A* - C, GCSE grades. Yet it is precisely this lower achieving group of young people who have the greatest need to continue with their education or training, so that they can achieve useful skills which prepare them to make a success of their lives

One of our Education and Skills Secretaries, Charles Clarke said 'This government is determined to smash school drop out rates at 16 and boost opportunities for those young people who have never viewed staying on as something for them'⁹.

In terms of target setting the UK government wants the number of NEET young people to reduce by 2% by 2010, (from a baseline of 10% at the end of 2004). The figure for 2005 was 10.9% and the provisional 2006 NEET figure was 10.3%¹⁰.

For further statistical information please use the following links:

http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000734/sfr22_2007.pdf

http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STA/t000751/NEET_Quarterly_Brief_Q4_2007.pdf

3) Main reasons and causes for leaving education

Based on interviews with young people, parents, teachers, Head teachers, Public Officers and research undertaken, (in particular 'Drop out Risk Factors – Clemson University – see Bibliography) it is clear that

there is no single influencing reason or single identifying risk factor which can be used to accurately predict whether or not a student will drop out of education or leave a course before completion.

Usually there will be a number of factors which influence the decision and for the purposes of this report I have divided them into four groups, education, personal, family and community.

Education Factors

- *Poor quality / un-stimulating teaching* e.g. lack of differentiation to cater for different learning styles (The better the quality of education, the better the students attendance)
- *Poor quality careers guidance* leading to poor course selection
- *Lack of choice when selecting optional course subjects* – e.g. the course in their local school is oversubscribed, or not offered and the nearest alternative school is too far away, or preferred combination of subjects not available because of timetabling 'issues'
- *Treatment by staff* e.g. Post 16 students wish to be treated as adults
- *Inflexible school disciplinary system* e.g. 'disciplinary system was too strict – I was punished for everything' (see case study One)
- *Bullying* by other students
- *Acceptance onto course without necessary basic skills level* e.g. acceptance onto Psychology course without high enough skills level in English
- *Falling behind on the course* and unable or unwilling to catch up (sometimes exacerbated by a lack of school support)
- *Whether the young person was fully aware of what their course would involve at the outset.* e.g. There had been a lack of information about courses when they were making decisions at the end of year 11.
- *No extra-curriculum participation / opportunities*
- *Feeling lonely or isolated.* e.g. when the young person's friends had been assigned to a different form within the same school / college or when he/she started a new school / college where they did not know anybody or when their friends 'dropped out'
- *Lack of academic information to parents and carers* about the curriculum, examinations and course work requirements

Personal Factors

- *Poor attendance*, particularly when reaching Persistent Absentee (PA) level (having more than 63 sessions of absence during the year)
- *Ongoing poor behaviour*, e.g. aggression, leading to regular disciplinary action by the school
- *Peer Group pressure inside school* e.g. from being part of a 'High Risk' group / gang
- *Personal illness* or long term injury
- *Mental Health issues*
- *Personal Learning Disability* or emotional disturbance
- *Parenthood* i.e. young girls becoming pregnant
- *Use of illegal substances* i.e. drugs or alcohol
- *Low levels of achievement / success*, often falling behind peers, both in examination results and/or course work
- *Lack of interest or boredom with the course* leading to a lack of effort
- *Lack of course relevance to a chosen career* e.g. army recruits

- *Difficulty meeting the requirements of the course.* e.g. falling behind with coursework and failing to meet deadlines, or obtaining poor marks in examinations or for coursework. Young people identified a range of causal factors to explain the difficulties they were experiencing:

The requirements of the course too demanding

Poor quality of teaching

Lack of time to study because of a part time job

Long periods of absence from school e.g. through illness – unable to catch up

Lack of effort by the young person

- *Belief in the greater value of work based experience* to future career prospects
- *The investment of time and effort that a young person has made to their course.* The evidence suggests that young people who left after completing a significant part of their course found the decision harder because by leaving education they were wasting the time and effort already invested in their course.

Family Influences

- *Low educational expectations*
- *Pupils withdrawn by parents for 'Elective Home Education' (EHE)*
- *Family disruption* e.g. witnesses to domestic abuse
- *Family bereavement*
- *Lack of family contact with / family support* for school
- *Lack of family interest* in school activities e.g. homework, parents evenings
- *Low educational level of parents* and siblings
- *Large number of siblings*
- *Carer responsibilities*
- *Not living with both natural parents* or living in 'care'
- *Desire to earn money* for personal use or family support
- *The role of other people in the decision making process.* The influence of parents, school/college staff or friends can play an important part in the decision to leave a course
- *Location factors* – distance of travel / time needed to attend school / college
- *Late entrants* – students who did not join at the start of the academic year

Community / Social Factors

- *High number of paid working hours outside school*, leaving little time for school work
- *Poor social behaviour outside school*, sometimes leading to criminal prosecutions
- *Low socioeconomic status / background* of area where young person is living
- *Cultural reasons* – continually moving home e.g. 'Traveller Children'
- *Forced marriage* – there has been prominence in the UK recently about girls from some cultures being forced into marriage at a very early age

4) National Bodies in charge of the prevention of the problem

Department for Children Schools and Younger Families (DCSF)

This is the relatively new department set up by the UK Government to lead on the whole national education policy and to achieve objectives set, in particular securing integrated children's services and educational excellence.

Current focus is on:

- Raising standards so that more children reach expected levels
- Lifting more children out of poverty
- Re-engaging disaffected young people

It is this department which leads on all new policies from the initial testing stages through to implementation.

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/aboutus/>

Ofsted

Again a national body, the 'new' Ofsted – the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, came into being on the 1st April 2007.

This is the body which inspects and regulates education and training for learners of all ages in all 'educational establishments' in the United Kingdom.

Ofsted teams visit all educational establishments in the UK, from pre-school nurseries upwards. Reports are produced on each individual establishment together with reports on national trends and making recommendations of areas for improvement.

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/portal/site/Internet/menuitem.455968b0530071c4828a0d8308c08a0c/?vgnextoid=e99c8587fd24a010VgnVCM1000008192a8c0RCRD>

Local Authorities (LA)

Local Authorities, and in particular their 'education departments', are the link between the DCSF and individual schools and educational organisations in their area.

They are responsible for educational provision in their area and their quality of provision is inspected by Ofsted, in the same way schools are inspected.

Control and distribution of school budgets, in line with DCSF guidance, using locally agreed funding formula, (based mainly on 'Age Weighted Pupil Numbers' – AWP – i.e. a set amount of funding per student) is one of their main areas of responsibility, as is implementation of DCSF policies and initiatives.

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/localauthorities/index.cfm>

Learning and Skills Council (LSC)

The LSC is a national, publicly funded organisation charged with building a dynamic and successful Further Education (FE) system for England.

The organisations funds all learning for young people aged 16-19 in colleges, schools and training providers, aiming to ensure young people have a full range of high quality courses to choose from and that there are no barriers to participation.

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/>

Connexions

'Connexions' is a national service which has 47 'Connexions Partnerships' throughout the country providing high quality information, advice and support to young people aged 13-19, living in England. It also provides support up to the age of 25 for young people who have learning difficulties or disabilities (or both).

This is one of the main organisations providing support when young people have difficulties in school and are in danger of 'dropping out'.

<http://www.connexions-direct.com/index.cfm?go=ConnexionsService>

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services – CAMHS

This is a national organisation which promotes the mental health and psychological wellbeing of children and young people and seeks to provide high quality, multidisciplinary mental health services to all children and young people with mental health problems and disorders to ensure effective assessment, treatment and support for them and their families.

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/health/camhs/>

Behaviour Support Service

The behaviour support service is part of the local authority (LA) and works in partnership with schools, within a framework of inclusion, to help them promote positive behaviour, and to provide effective support to students, parents and schools, where behaviour is a concern and is affecting achievement.

Many schools buy-in this service from their LA, to give extra support with the more challenging students, but financial restrictions often mean there is not as much support as a school really needs.

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/ete/behaviour/support/>

Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)

Pupil Referral Units are a type of school, set up and run by the local authority (LA) to provide education for students who cannot attend 'normal' school.

They are set up to enable LAs to meet their statutory duty to provided education to all young people within the compulsory school age range and tend to be for particular types / needs of students e.g. there are special units for teenage mothers and pregnant school girls, and other units for those young people who are particularly badly behaved.

Again places are limited by the availability of funding and only the neediest cases will be offered a place.

http://www.dfes.gov.uk/exclusions/alternative_provision_policies/pupil_referral_units.cfm

Inclusion Trust

The Inclusion Trust is an organisation which has been running programmes for disaffected teenagers within the UK for the past 7 years, supported by DCSF. It has a considerable reputation, is cited in numerous government reports, is an OECD best practice case study and now runs across a number of European countries (Ireland, Holland and Sweden) as well as consulting to Australian, New Zealand and US state and national organisations working with disaffected youth.

Inclusion Trust has a model (Notschool.net) that has worked on re-engaging the 4,000+ UK young people it has dealt with to date back into learning; 98% of young people placed on its programmes achieve formal accreditation recognised by QCA; 67% of the cohort leaving in June 2007 went on to attend further education, hence its interest to EU. Currently Inclusion Trust is working with Italy, Cyprus, Greece, Bulgaria, Finland and Austria on a number of EU funded framework 6 and 7 initiatives related to disaffected young people.

<http://www.inclusiontrust.org/inclusiontrust.org/NS-overview-notschoolhome.html>

<http://www.inclusiontrust.org/inclusiontrust.org/IT-media-papers.html> - research and evaluation reports

Safe Speak

Safe Speak is a counselling service for 9 – 19 year olds across Derbyshire. They work in schools and other venues.

Again support is limited by the availability of funding and the organisation relies heavily on fund raising and fees charged to schools.

<http://www.safespeak.org.uk/index.html>

Private Providers

For students unable to secure sufficient support from the Behaviour Support Service or a place in a Pupil Referral Unit, there are Ofsted approved 'private providers' who can be used to meet needs which their mainstream school cannot provide.

However their use is limited because of the cost, which in almost all cases will be higher than the income received by the school (AWPN), for that particular student.

Elective Home Education – EHE

Although not strictly speaking a 'National Body or local Body in Charge of Preventing the Problem' I do feel it is relevant to mention EHE because a number of students who 'drop out' are, at least theoretically, educated at home. Elective Home Education is defined as where parents or carers decide to provide education for their child at home rather than sending them to school. In the UK there is no reliable data on the number of children educated at home. Available statistics are inconsistent and there is no recognised source. Despite this there is anecdotal evidence that home education is on the increase and that some parents / carers are using the claim of EHE to avoid being prosecuted for not ensuring their children attend school.

Youth Justice System – Youth Inclusion and Support Panels (YISPs)

Youth Inclusion and Support Panels (YIPS) aim to prevent anti-social behaviour and offending by 8-13 year olds who are considered to be at high risk of offending.

They have been designed to help the Youth Justice Board meet its target of putting in place, in each YOT (Youth Offending Team) in England and Wales, programmes that will identify and reduce the likelihood of young people committing offences.

Panels made up of a number of representatives of different agencies (e.g. Police, schools, health & social services). The main emphasis of a panel's work is to ensure that children and their families, at the earliest possible opportunity, can access mainstream public services.

5) National Policies implemented to combat school early leaving

The UK Government has for some years adopted a policy of 'Every Child Matters' which involves a multi-agency approach to meeting the needs of every child and increasing their happiness and well being. For further details on this policy please use the following link:

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/multiagencyworking/>

In October 2007 the UK Government¹¹ put forward proposals to resolve these problems, aiming to make education and/or training to the age of 18 a reality for all.

The UK government is raising the compulsory participation age in two stages:

- From 2013 young people will participate in education until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17
- From 2015 they will participate until the age of 18 or until they have completed 'A' levels or an equivalent 'level 3' programme, whichever is sooner.

The first cohort of young people to be affected will start secondary school in September 2008. This cohort will be the first to be taught under a new Secondary Curriculum, and the first to have entitlement at age 16 to the full range of new Diplomas, which will be in place by 2013.

These diplomas, which will supplement GCSE, NVQ, and BTEC qualifications (see section 1), will be available in three levels – Foundation, Higher and Advanced and the subjects will be:

Construction and the Built Environment; Creative and Media; Engineering; Society, Health & Development; Information Technology; Hospitality & Catering; Manufacturing; Beauty Therapy; Business Administration/Finance; Land Based; Public Services; Retail; Sport & Leisure, Travel & Tourism;

The aim is that from 2013, all young people will continue to participate in education or training post-16. They will be able to do so in a number of ways, including:

- *full time education*, including school, college and home education
- *work-based learning*, such as an apprenticeship, including traditional contracts of apprenticeship

- *part time education or training*, if they are employed, self-employed or volunteering more than 20 hours per week

The new provision will also include a new set of subject-based Diplomas in Science, Languages and the Humanities.

For further information about 'Raising Expectations' proposals please use the following link:

<http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/Cm%207065.pdf>

6) Strategies developed at national and local level to prevent school early leaving

To make sure all of the 'Every Child Matters policy is implemented, responsibilities will fall on various agencies:

- *Providers*, such as schools, will be responsible for the quality of provision and ensuring young people attend, by helping them if they encounter problems with or during their learning
- *Local Authorities* will be responsible for ensuring that young people participate and for providing the support they need to overcome any barriers to learning e.g. transport, support for young people with special educational needs
- *Employers* will have a central role providing work-related learning opportunities and apprenticeships. There will be no requirements on them if they employ 16 -17 year old for less than 20 hours per week, or if they provide accredited training. If they employ a young person for more than that, without training, the young person will need to provide evidence that they are in learning before they can start employment and the employer will need to check this. The employer will also need to release the young person for the equivalent of a day each week so they can train elsewhere, but employers will not be required to pay the young person for that time.

All of these requirements are being backed up by legislation and training. The proposals say that 'responsibility for participating rests primarily with the young person but parents will be expected to do what they can to help, support and enable their child to participate and they will be held to account if they are found to be part of the problem'.

The Local Authority (LA) will have powers to issue *Attendance Notices* and *Parenting Contracts* and apply for *Parenting Orders*. They also have a duty to set up an *Independent Panel*; powers to issue *Fixed Penalty Notices* and to take young people to the *Youth Court* where a fine or unpaid work could be imposed.

Support is also being given to *young people supervised by the youth justice system*, including those in custody, as engagement in education and training can play a critical role in helping them to develop the skills they need to life and work and this is felt to be a key factor in reducing re-offending.¹²

For *students with learning difficulties* local authorities will continue to offer support up to their 25th birthday.

Young people in care will receive additional support¹³ and guidance by:

- Piloting ways to give these young people a greater say over when they leave care
- Providing an entitlement to support from a personal adviser until the age of 25
- Requiring local authorities to provide a bursary for all care leavers who go on to university

To enable *teenage parents* to participate in learning, they need access to childcare and provision that is flexible and suited to their needs. Support is therefore given whilst parents continue to learn.

Similarly consideration is being given to find ways to help *young people with caring responsibilities* to receive the support they need to participate in education.

September Guarantee

This was introduced nationally across the UK from September 2007 and is a guarantee to offer a place in post-16 learning to every young person who wants one by the September after they complete Year 11 i.e. after finishing their 'compulsory' education.

Financial Support for Young People whilst training

Subject to satisfactory attendance, 16-19 year olds in education or unwaged training in households with an income of less than £30,810 are currently eligible for *Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)*. The government intends to make changes so that this funding is more closely linked to young people's attainment and behaviour as well. The EMA will be extended to include all educational provision that is approved by local authorities, including provision that they commission from the voluntary sector, so that young people can be financially supported to take a wider range of courses.

The amount of money actually received is means tested and is currently between £10 and £30 per week to help out with the costs of staying in learning after 16.

For further information about Education Maintenance Allowance please use the following link:

<http://ema.direct.gov.uk/>

Derbyshire County Council - 'NEET Prevention Strategy for 2007-2010'

Working with other agencies working in this field, particularly the Learning and Skills Council, Derbyshire County Council has developed a local strategy aiming to:

- Reduce the numbers of students who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) year on year to achieve a November 2010 target of 6.1% (in 2005 the actual was 6.5%)
- Contribute to an increase in the number and percentage of young people who remain in learning up to the age of 19 and beyond
- Contribute to an increase in the achievement of both age 16 and age 19 achievement targets

This strategy includes:

- Client Tracking
 - knowing where the students are
 - what they are doing

- whether they are missing education
- using this information to inform local planning and strategies
- Delivery of high quality information, advice and guidance
 - supporting learning providers in the delivery of broad based guidance
 - ensuring key workers have the training they need
 - targeted support for those at risk of becoming NEET
 - helping teenage mothers and care leavers to re-engage in learning
- Effective Early Intervention
 - auditing and monitoring schemes and programmes
 - identifying gaps in provision
 - developing a 'Directory of Other Education Opportunities'
 - identifying barriers to progression, retention and achievement 'Post 16'
 - Production of a flow chart as an 'Aide Memoir' to illustrate referral processes, indicating all possible avenues
- Supply of Learning Provision
 - complete a curriculum map of opportunities in Derbyshire
 - enhance provider responsiveness to social inclusion / NEET issues
 - continue to develop existing pre-level 2 work based learning provision
- Financial Incentives
 - market the availability of Education Maintenance Allowances and 'Care 2 Learn'
 - specific targeting on Hard to Reach young people, including potential NEET, looked after children, young carers, Care Leavers etc.

7) Identification of Training Initiatives in the area

Teachers need more training opportunities to be able to develop the key competencies e.g.

- knowledge of how to identify young people at risk of dropping out
- general counselling and bereavement counselling skills
- skills for 'conflict resolution'
- knowledge of the referral process and what support and initiatives are available locally
- skills to identify and combat bullying
- knowledge of the 'Common Assessment Framework' (CAF)
- knowledge and time to write and implement meaningful, practical Individual Learning Plans
- an ability to suggest and try innovative provision where necessary

Structured training initiatives for teachers purely on 'drop out' prevention or 'Best Practise' for 'drop out' prevention are very difficult to find in the UK and this could be a reflection on the level of concern about the problem in the UK.

However there are training opportunities on related topics such as 'Behaviour Management' and 'Absence Management' but even these are only offered if a school has a particular problem in these areas. In those circumstances training tends to be arranged by the Local Authority (LA) using a recognised expert in the field, perhaps from the Connexions Service.

There are also opportunities for teachers and Head Teachers to expand their personal knowledge by undertaking research through the internet or one of the recognised UK sites e.g.

Teacher net: <http://www.teachernet.com/>

Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) <http://www.tda.gov.uk/>

Informal training through attendance at 'Multiple Agency meetings' to discuss individual children. An example of this can be found at http://www.sheffieldsafetynet.gov.uk/ip_manual/Part%2024-25.pdf

Because of the way schools are funded with delegated budgets, any training has to be paid for by the schools themselves. In practise this means that there are only limited training funds and if a member of staff does attend a training course, they are expected to cascade their new knowledge to other staff, when they return to school.

Derbyshire training opportunities consist of:

- a 'Course and Conference Programme' that offers training to school staff on a wide range of curriculum and provision issues
- Training is focused on the effective inclusion of all pupils and the recognition of the needs and difficulties of vulnerable or potentially vulnerable pupils
- Derbyshire also offers specific training focusing on pupils with 'Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties' – these focus on whole school issues such as developing emotionally intelligent schools and on specific approaches such as managing behaviour, reducing exclusions etc.
- The National Strategies Behaviour and Attendance Programme
- The implementation of the National Programme for Specialist Leaders in Behaviour and Attendance

8) Identification of best practises

The following 'Best Practise' strategies are based on a list of '15 effective strategies for Drop Out Prevention' produced by the 'National Drop Out Prevention Centre' at Clemson University USA. However I have only selected 14 of their suggestions, which are supported by our practical experience at Wilsthorpe and research enquiries. (The 15th suggestion 'Early Childhood Education' is outside of our remit)

<http://www.dropoutprevention.org/effstrat/default.htm>

Family Involvement – research consistently shows that family involvement has a direct, positive effect on children's achievement and is the most accurate predictor of a student's success in school. This is confirmed by our own experience, the quality of otherwise of a student's family life has a huge impact on whether or not they have the potential to drop out and is one of the most important areas on which to concentrate. (See above 'Main reasons for leaving education – Family Factors')

Reading and Writing Programmes – early interventions to help low-achieving students recognise that focusing on reading and writing skills is the foundation for effective learning in all other subjects. Again confirmed by our local experience as well as national guidance, but in addition we would add the need for an emphasis on Mathematics and ICT skills, both of which are also essential. (See above section 2 'Main National Trends' - 'A key aspect of concern about 14-19 year olds is their level of functional skills in English, Maths and ICT')

Mentoring / Tutoring – mentoring is a one-to-one caring supportive relationship between a mentor and the person being mentored. Tutoring is also a one-to-one activity but focuses on academics and is an effective practice when addressing specific needs such as reading, writing, mathematics or ICT competencies. At Wilsthorpe we have used mentoring extensively both in the form of teacher/student mentors and

student/student mentors not only for academic improvement but also to try to improve poor behaviour and attendance. However although there are considerable benefits, there are also difficulties such as the availability of staff time for 'one to one' support and the need to train student mentors.

Service Learning – this connects meaningful community service experience with academic learning. Although we have only limited experience of this at Wilsthorpe, e.g. litter picking on site instead of serving a detention, it is an area which we feel has potential.

Alternative Schooling – alternative schooling provides potential drop outs a variety of options which can still lead to graduation, with programmes paying special attention to the students individual social needs. At Wilsthorpe we have used several forms of alternative schooling including offering an 'Alternative Curriculum', Pupil Referral Units and Private Providers (see 'National Bodies' above), but our ability to use these alternatives is limited by the availability of places and the availability of the necessary funding.

Learning Styles / Multiple Intelligences – when educators show students there are different ways to learn, students find new and creative ways to solve problems, achieve success and become lifelong learners – There is much evidence that each of us learns in different ways – Visual Learners - they like seeing diagrams and respond well to graphical illustrations, maps etc. Auditory Learners respond best to hearing things, sometimes musical but not always. Kinaesthetic Learners often like to physically do something to reinforce. At Wilsthorpe we have found the use of all three to be essential for successful 'whole class' lessons.

The following link may be of interest in this context:

http://www.thomasarmstrong.com/multiple_intelligences.htm

Out of school experiences – many schools provide after-school and summer enhancement programmes that eliminate information loss and inspire interest in a variety of areas. We feel this is very important and offer a number of lunch-time and after school clubs / activities as well as many opportunities for educational school trips. However one area of difficulty, particularly for school trips, is the prevailing culture in the UK of the need to avoid / minimise risk. This means that all trips have to have a written Risk Assessment and some unions are recommending that their members do not participate, in case of personal liability following an accident.

Professional Development – teachers who work with students at high risk of academic failure need to feel supported and need to have an avenue by which they can develop skills, techniques and learn about innovative strategies. See above 'Training initiatives in this area'.

Individualised instruction – a customised individual programme for each student which would allow teachers flexibility with instructional programmes and extracurricular activities. This flexibility allows teachers to respond to the learning styles that have been identified, however although this sounds ideal, and our teachers do try to do this, it is difficult to achieve in practise in a 'normal' school, partly because of the constraints of time and funding and partly because of the requirements to teach the National Curriculum. In practise the best many schools can achieve is offering the opportunity to follow courses of a more vocational nature e.g. Motor Vehicle Studies, Hair and Beauty, Construction, Horticulture, Photography etc.

Instructional Technologies – Technology offers some of the best opportunities for delivering instruction which engages students in authentic learning, addresses multiple intelligences and adapts to student's learning styles. Supported by targeted funding from the UK central government, in recent years all schools have expanded their stock of computer equipment and specialised e-learning software. The ratio of students to numbers of curriculum computers is monitored during 'Ofsted' visits.

Systematic Renewal – a continuing process of evaluating goals and objectives related to school policies, practices and organisational structures as they impact a diverse group of learners. All UK schools have a School Development Plan (SDP) and this will incorporate goals and targets against which to measure progress.

Community Collaboration – when all groups in a community provide collective support to the school, an infrastructure is created that provides a caring supportive environment where youth can thrive and achieve. 'Schools can no longer be islands in communities with no bridges to the mainland. Bridges must be built to connect schools, homes and communities'¹⁴. 'Many schools will build local action teams consisting of school personnel, social services, parents, faith based organisations, police, community based organisations etc. who are major stakeholders in your community'¹⁵. This is an approach which we follow at Wilsthorpe in the form of 'Multi Agency Teams', (but without 'faith based organisations'), is, we feel, the best way to help the most challenging students.

Violence Prevention / Conflict Resolution – a comprehensive prevention plan, including conflict resolution, must deal with potential violence as well as crisis management. Thankfully in the UK we do not have the level of violence sometimes experienced in the USA, but nevertheless we do recognise the importance of a behaviour policy which is clear to all stakeholders – staff, students and parents. We also recognise the importance of preventing bullying or dealing with it firmly if it occurs, so that students can feel that their school is a safe and welcoming environment.

Career Education / Workforce readiness – a quality guidance programme is essential for all students. Career guidance and Work Experience programmes are part of what all schools in the UK offer.

My final suggestion for 'Best Practise' is in fact an organisation identified as part of my research and mentioned above in section 4, the 'Inclusion Trust'. Based on my research this does appear to be an excellent organisation, working successfully in the field of this project.

All of the above 'Best Practices' appear to be readily transferable to other European Countries.

9) Case Studies

Case Study 1

Male, aged 15, Nottingham, UK

Attended secondary school as normal and attendance record was acceptable. Comes from a good socio-economic background, parents very supportive of son and tried hard to keep him out of trouble and in education. Student has a good relationship with parents and on a 'one to one' basis with college staff can be a pleasant and articulate young man, but could be influenced by peer group pressure and often misbehaved to attract peer group attention. Found it difficult to accept criticism and found the college disciplinary policy inflexible. Disruptive behaviour affected teaching of others in his class, especially when he refused to follow the teacher's instructions. Behaviour deteriorated significantly over a 24 month period before being permanently excluded by the college. Did not feel securing qualifications was important for his chosen career – intends to join the army as soon as he is old enough, and did not like doing school work outside of college.

Causes

Unable to conform to college disciplinary policy which he felt was 'very strict' and meant he was 'punished for everything'. Also felt that certain teachers singled him out for punishment. Could be easily led into misbehaviour by peer group and regularly associated with young people with similar attitudes. Not motivated to achieve qualifications to improve long term career prospects.

Approach

The college tried a number of approaches including 'one to one' mentoring; meetings with 'Behaviour Support'; numerous meetings with parents; parental withdrawal of 'privileges' as an incentive towards good behaviour; college detentions; a 'managed move' to another school (temporary move to another school on a trial basis).

Results

College approaches / solutions were not successful. Student was eventually permanently excluded and placed by the Local Authority in a specialist unit with an emphasis on practical / vocational rather than academic work. This placement has proved to be more successful and student is happy in this environment but does acknowledge it is only filling in time until he can join the army.

Case Study 2

Female, aged 16, Nottingham, UK.

Comes from a poor socio-economic background, in which her older brothers do not work. Had a poor attendance record from the age of 12 onwards and the 'Education Welfare Officer was involved at an early stage to try to help with this problem. Student unable to accept college discipline, which she felt was too strict. Parents, despite describing their daughter as being 'very stubborn', believe they have a good relationship with her and were not supportive of the college, eventually withdrawing her to give 'Elective Home Education' (EHE). Student was not motivated by a need to obtain qualifications as she believes these are not essential to achieve her long term goal, which is to work in 'Hair and Beauty'.

Causes

Unable to accept college discipline and refused to serve detentions. Poor attendance record – often refused to get up in the morning. Felt she was being 'treated like a child' in college by the teachers. Claims to have been the subject of bullying, but no evidence of this from the teacher. Also, some problems in Mathematics where she felt the work was 'too difficult'. Not motivated to achieve qualifications to improve long term career prospects.

Approach

Applied college 'Attendance' policy and Education Welfare Officer worked to try to improve attendance. Student received several short term exclusions but always re-admitted into college. After exclusion always invited parents to attend a 're-integration meeting' but parents failed to attend on numerous occasions despite letters being sent home. Timetable amended to one which did not make 'too many demands'.

Results

Attendance not brought up to satisfactory level – parents being prosecuted. No improvement in student behaviour and student continued to refuse to accept college discipline until withdrawn from college by parents to give 'Elective Home Education'. Timetable amendment did not provide a solution.

Case Study 3

Male, aged 16, Nottingham, UK

Comes from a poor socio-economic background and has a very poor attendance record which started when aged 13/14 – finds it difficult to get up in a morning. Parents, who now have a good relationship with their son, put this down to 'lack of enthusiasm' and 'long term illness' – although nothing specific was found during medical tests. Student is bored with lessons, especially 'English', but thought practical lessons were 'ok'. Teachers believe student has good ability, particularly in Mathematics and Science and tests suggest that if willing to try, he could be very successful in GCSE examinations. Parents and students believe the strict disciplinary system applied in college is 'generally a good idea'. Student not motivated to achieve academic qualifications and has changed long term career plans regularly but at the time of the interview had long term plans to be a hairdresser and expected to receive training and possibly an apprenticeship, to achieve this goal

Causes

Has a very poor attendance record, only in college for 53% of the time – often refused to get up in the morning because of 'lack of enthusiasm', especially after returning following long term illness. Parents believe they have not been put under any pressure to make him attend although this is not the view taken by the college where records show regular chasing telephone calls to his parents. Student says he is 'bored with lessons 90%' of the time, especially 'English' – both parents and student felt this was because they were 'panicked' into making 'option subject choices' for the last two years in college and chose the wrong subjects. Parents and student feel the college could have been more flexible once it was recognized the wrong subjects had been chosen. Student feels he is 'picked on' by some teachers

Approach

Applied college 'Attendance' policy and Education Welfare Officer has worked to try to improve attendance. Deputy Head has had regular meetings with mother and student. Student allowed to change one of 'Option Subjects' and moved from 'Sports Studies' to Art.

Results

Still on college roll although attendance is still well below a satisfactory level. Student will be taking only a limited number of examinations and teachers believe he will significantly under achieve against his ability level

Case Study 4

Female, aged 16, Nottingham, UK

Comes from a reasonable socio-economic background but when aged 15/16 had a poor attendance record. Parents, split up about 8 years ago and student has been living with her father, with whom she has a very good, close, relationship, ever since. She does not see her mother on a regular basis. Has no real difficulty with any particular academic subject but did have some difficulties with her form tutor with whom she was unable to form any rapport. Student believes this led to 'unjustified detentions' and eventually she was withdrawn from college for 'Elective Home Education' (EHE). Unfortunately this was not successful in enabling any examination success and student has now returned into the college sixth form, to try to achieve qualifications which will help in her long term career which is to work with children or 'Social Work'.

Causes

Had a poor attendance record when aged 15/16 partly caused by in college bullying and partly because of 'difficulties' with her form tutor and one or two other teachers. Also, student suffered a 'traumatic personal incident' outside college which affected her self confidence and her attitude when arriving at lessons, often arriving 'up tight, upset and needing to talk to someone'

Approach

Applied college 'Attendance' policy and father and daughter had several meetings with the Deputy Head and one meeting with college Governors. Withdrawal for 'Elective Home Education' was tried and the services of an external counsellor were used to help with the 'traumatic personal incident'.

Results

Elective Home Education was unsuccessful and student did not achieve any examination success at the end of her compulsory schooling (aged 16). The counsellor used to give support following 'traumatic personal incident' was much more successful and helped to restore student's self confidence, so much so that she has now returned into the college sixth form, although she could have undertaken 'post - 16' courses elsewhere, and she is now highly regarded for her college work.

Case Study 5

Female, aged 17, Nottingham, UK

Comes from a satisfactory socio-economic background and had a good school attendance record, apart from ill health absences. Parents split up and student has been living with her biological father since the age of 12. However she still retains regular contact with her mother and their relationship has improved following a low point after the marriage split. Lacks social skills and often gets herself into situations which the majority of students would avoid and this lead to a number of disciplinary problems. Has low self esteem and very

conscious of her weight and appearance. Undertook 'Alternative Curriculum' course but only limited success. Left school to start college post-16 course, but dropped off the course before completion.

Causes

Poor disciplinary school record and difficult to keep on task in a classroom situation. Lacks social skills and often involved herself in other people's conversations and arguments. Suffered some bullying at school and this continued at college. Bullying was one of the reasons she dropped off the college course but she also fell behind with the work and couldn't catch up. Additionally the college was slow in paying her 'EMA' (Education Maintenance Allowance) and this caused much frustration and financial difficulty. Mismatch between her aspirations and her ability

Approach

Part of a small school group offered an 'Alternative Curriculum', more suited to her abilities interests and designed to develop social and life skills. Lots of individual counseling and regular, almost daily, meetings with both mother (who was employed at her school) and father, to discuss behaviour. Also supported by 'Behaviour Support' service and 'Connexions' service.

Results

Student managed to stay on school roll until age 16 and then moved on to college. This was her way of dropping out of the school community, as she could have done the same course in the school 6th form. Unfortunately she experienced similar problems on the college course to those experienced in school and she quickly dropped out of the course. However she then moved straight onto an 'E to E' (Education to Employment) course where she is happy because 'they only have small groups of students' and 'bullying is not tolerated'.

More information on case studies and interviews are available on the School Inclusion Portal at the following address:

<http://schoolinclusion.pixel-online.org/reports.php>

10) Conclusions

- Accurate statistical information on the full extent of the 'drop out' problem in the UK are not available
- Similarly, information on how the position in the UK compares to the position elsewhere in Europe is also not available
- Youngsters who are likely to 'drop out' can be identified from a very early age and early intervention is essential for the best chance of success
- Where a student is identified as a potential 'drop out' there is no simple strategy readily in place to guide teachers on the best way forward and much can depend on the dedication and expertise of individual teachers
- There is clearly a need for a support mechanism which allows a school to work alongside the family. This is not something for which schools are properly funded at present. It is far too often 'too little too late'
- Although there are many supporting organisations available to help, both nationally and locally,

access to their support is often restricted to the availability of funding and the time which that funding can purchase, this means that only the really serious cases receive direct support from experts or organisations outside of school

- In almost all cases there is no one single reason for 'dropping out' or coming close to 'dropping out'. Usually there are multiple reasons all of which may need to be investigated to give the best chance of providing successful help
- The support which teachers and schools can offer to students and their parents / carers is limited by the time they have available, and the amount of teacher time is usually restricted by the amount of funding available
- To be able to give the best support and guidance it is very important to take into account all of the factors which are causing the situation i.e. personal, educational, family and community
- A 'multi-agency' approach is the one which works best in practise
- The length of time between 'dropping out' of school and moving to alternative provision can often affect the success or otherwise of the new arrangements. In some instances, particularly in their last year of 'compulsory education', students can 'drift' until the last Friday in June and then fall into the NEET trap without support
- There needs to be a system which retains information about children at risk and this information should be readily accessible by authorised individuals / institutions. Although there are data protection / civil rights issues, children at risk tend to belong to vulnerable families and supporting the family is just as important as supporting the individual
- Opportunities for teacher training in this field are not readily available and often further restricted by the shortage of funding allocated by each school to attend those courses
- Opportunities for training and supporting parents / carers are not readily available
- Parents need someone they can work with. This needs to be someone they can trust which in turn requires an investment of time and money
- New ideas beyond conventional educational systems need to be considered which are more personalised to individual needs
- The EMA scheme has mostly been welcomed and has made a positive impact on the way young people participate in post-compulsory education, but the effectiveness of the scheme in meeting it's objectives is influenced by the level of motivation which young people have and they and their family's other sources of income. It is also very important that expected EMA funding is received on time, without argument
- The UK Government has put forward, and is putting in place, a number of ideas to ensure young people are given the education they need to give them the best chance in life e.g. extending the age of compulsory education; EMA allowances; the September guarantee; offering new diploma courses; etc. but it is worth remembering that these ideas are not without opposition:

'This is a big mistake. Many of those who stand to benefit have already renounced conventional education by the time they reach 16 and forcing them to attend classes for a further two years won't do any good. Also, unless these extra two years lead to meaningful qualifications that help young people find better jobs rather than acquire pointless credentials, it will be a waste of time' (Extract from article in the 'Mail on Sunday' 13/1/08)

It will therefore be necessary to monitor closely the success or otherwise of these proposals.

11) Recommendations

To Public Officers

- A system to accurately measure numbers of students who 'drop out' of the education system and monitor individual students would be beneficial, to identify the extent of the problem
- Once accurate numbers have been established they should be published so that it is possible to compare performance across the country
- Funding is one of the main reasons why schools do not / cannot access external support for individual students at risk. There is therefore a need to consider whether the LMS formula 'Special Needs' funding model currently being operated is sufficient to support students who fall into the 'drop out' or potential 'drop out' category
- There is a need for a support mechanism which allows a school to work alongside the family. This is not something for which schools are properly funded at present. It is far too often 'too little too late'
- There needs to be a system which retains information about children at risk both across the county and nationally and this information should be readily accessible by authorised individuals / institutions. Although there are data protection / civil rights issues, children at risk tend to belong to vulnerable families and supporting the family is just as important as supporting the individual
- New ideas beyond conventional educational systems need to be considered *and funded*, which are more personalised to individual needs
- It may be helpful to consider whether the Inclusion Trust's 'Notschool.net' model offers good value for money in Derbyshire when compared with other traditional alternatives for re-engaging young people
- Often knowledge of how to access sources of expertise outside of school is known only to a limited number of staff in school and they themselves can find their knowledge out of date e.g. as names and telephone numbers of contacts assigned to each school change. In these circumstances a regularly updated 'one stop shop' web site for local sources of help would be very helpful
- Parents need someone they can work with. This needs to be someone they can trust which in turn requires an investment of time and money

- A flow chart as an 'Aide Memoire' to illustrate referral processes would be very useful for schools

To Head Teachers and Teachers

- To be able to give the best support and guidance it is very important to take into account all of the factors which are causing the situation i.e. personal, educational, family and community
- A 'multi-agency' approach is the one which works best in practise
- Consider alternative schooling or community service type work for potential 'drop-outs'
- When setting school budgets try to provide sufficient funding for alternative, more personalised / individualised forms of learning for children at risk of 'dropping out' – this could bring long term benefits to all stakeholders
- There is a need for a support mechanism which allows a school to work alongside the family. This is not something for which schools are properly funded at present. It is far to often 'too little too late'
- Involve parents / carers whenever possible – this can have a very positive impact on children's achievement
- Reading and writing programmes are very beneficial to help low achieving students, because reading and writing is the foundation for effective learning in all subjects
- It is very important to differentiate learning styles to meet the differing needs of each student i.e. Visual Learners; Auditory Learners; Kinaesthetic Learners;
- Out of school experiences can be very beneficial for students at risk of 'dropping out' e.g. after school classes, school trips etc
- Teachers working with students at a high risk of academic failure need to have an avenue by which they can develop their skills, techniques and learn about innovative strategies
- Mentoring on a one-to-one basis is an excellent way to develop a caring relationship between the mentor and the person being mentored
- Technology can offer some of the best opportunities for delivering information which engages the student
- Career Education / Workforce Readiness – a quality guidance programme is essential for all students to help them make the right choices

To Parents and Students

- Current figures project a sharp decline in low skilled jobs up to 2020, whilst the importance of high-tech jobs increases
- It is anticipated that by 2020 there will only be around 600,000 jobs in the UK undertaken by those without qualifications, compared to around 3.2 million such jobs now
- Students who achieve low functional skills in English, Maths and ICT are more likely to drop into the group who are Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET)
- Looking forward to 2014, the number of people working in the lower skilled occupations in the UK is projected to fall by 20% whilst the number in higher skilled occupations is projected to rise by almost 10%
- Young people without qualifications and / or basic skills in English and Maths are likely to earn significantly less over their lifetime than their more qualified peers
- Against these projections it is essential that students leave school / finish their education with the highest possible qualifications they can achieve. This will give them the best chance of securing the most remunerative employment during their working lives
- It is essential to keep in close touch with the school if problems occur, remembering that not all supporting resources are school based
- You are not alone – if you are concerned about your child, it is important that you contact the school sooner rather than later
- If your child has a 'barrier to education' talk to your local 'provider', they would like to work with you to find a solution
- The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) could be a way to provide useful finance for students to continue in education, 'Post-16'

Abbreviations

- AWPN – Age Weighted Pupil Numbers
- BTEC – Business & Technician Education Council
- CAF – Common Assessment Framework
- DCSF – Department for Schools, Children and Families
- DfEE – Department for Education and Employment
- DfES – Department for Education and Skills
- EHE – Elective Home Education
- EMA – Education Maintenance Allowance
- FE – Further Education
- FSM – Free School Meals
- GCSE – General Certificate of Education
- GCSE A Level – General Certificate of Education studied by students between 16-18
- ILP – Individual Learning Plan
- LA - Local Authority (in education sometimes called Local Education Authority or LEA)
- LMS – Local Management of Schools
- LSC – Learning and Skills Council
- NDPC – National Drop Out Prevention Centre, Clemson University, USA
- NET – Not in any Education or Training
- NEET – Not in Employment, Education or Training
- NVQ – National Vocational Qualifications
- Ofsted – Office for Standards in Education
- PAs – Persistence Absentees
- QCA – Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
- YISP – Youth Inclusion and Support Panel

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⁴ DfES document 'Sixteen, and things are looking up'

⁵ NEET Statistics Quarterly Brief

⁶ Figures supplied by 'Connexions' Derbyshire

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⁸ Raising Expectations: Staying in education and training post 16 – Secretary of State for Education March 07

⁹ Teachers Magazine Issue November 2007

¹⁰ Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16-18 year olds in England, June 2007

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