

Evaluation of the Youth Contract Programme: Support for 16-17 year olds who are not in education, employment or training

Project information sheet

The Institute for Employment Studies (IES), in partnership with Professor Sue Maguire, Centre for Education and Industry at the University of Warwick, and the Policy Research Institute at Leeds Metropolitan University, has been commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to undertake the evaluation of the Youth Contract element targeted at 16-17 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Policy background

Young people who are NEET continue to be a major focus of research and policy interest, due to the disproportionate effect of the economic downturn on the youth labour market and young people's transitions into adulthood. The Youth Contract has been introduced in order to support young people aged between 16 and 24 who are NEET or unemployed to make a successful transition into work, education or training.

As part of the Youth Contract policy, an initiative was outlined which aims to offer targeted support to disengaged 16-17 year olds to participate in education, an Apprenticeship or a job with training. The DfE is providing funding over three years to support 16-17 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) who have no A* to C Grade GCSEs. The eligibility has recently been extended to young people with one GCSE A*-C; or young offenders released from custody with 1 or more GCSEs grade A*-C; or young people in care or have left care with 1 or more GCSEs grade A*-C.

The Youth Contract (YC) for 16 and 17-year olds is being implemented across England using a payments-by-results model. In three areas it forms part of the City Deal.

Aims and objectives of the study

The DfE has identified three objectives for the Youth Contract. These are:

- To support 16-17 year olds who are not in education, employment or training and at risk of long-term disengagement to move into education, training or employment with training and to sustain this outcome.
- To increase these young people's experience and qualifications so that they have the opportunity to continue in education and successfully find work, reducing the proportion that becomes unemployed in adult life.
- To test methods of local delivery and payment by results, increasing the effectiveness of these models and developing best practice.

The evaluation will assist the Department to understand whether the YC is effective in supporting disengaged 16 and 17 year olds to move into full-time education or training, an Apprenticeship or employment with training and if so, how it achieves this and why mechanisms proved effective. Over-arching issues for the evaluation to address are:

- The impact of the YC on the outcomes of the eligible NEET population.
- Key lessons from the design and implementation of programmes to meet local needs
- Value for money and outcomes achieved through implementation
- Local variations in delivery and differences between delivery in the core cities and other areas.

Research approach

- Strand 1: comprises an impact assessment to establish the impact on engagement and attainment
- Strand 2: involves an economic and value for money assessment of the programme
- Strand 3: uses process evaluation to track design and delivery over time and includes interviews with national stakeholders and with prime contractors, a survey of local authorities, and extensive longitudinal, multi-perspective case studies.
- Strand 4: will synthesise all elements of the evaluation data in order to provide a narrative of implementation, cost and impact

Timetable

The study will run from November 2012 to March 2014. The final report and research brief will bring together the findings from all research elements.

For more information about this project

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