

Children, Schools and Families Committee inquiry into young people not in education, employment or training

ATL Submission

16 December 2009

Background

The Children, Schools and Families Select Committee invited written submissions to its inquiry into young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). Amongst other things, the inquiry was interested in:

- Strategies for the identification of young people at risk of falling into the "NEET" category
- The effectiveness of the Government's NEET strategy
- The opportunities and future prospects in education, training and employment for 16-18 year olds

The submission builds upon existing ATL policy on the curriculum, assessment, equalities and apprenticeships as well as ATL Cymru's response to the Welsh Assembly Government's consultation on *Skills that work for Wales*.

ATL's response draws upon the view of Conference 2009 in resolutions 21 (Diplomas: inclusion and entitlement in rural areas), and 60 (FE Lecturers teaching 14-16 year-olds).

Democratic process

To be approved retrospectively at the Executive Committee of 30 January 2010.

Some of the evidence drew upon discussions that took place during the two meetings of the STG on 14-19 Curriculum and its assessment in November and December 2009 and the survey associated with this STG that was conducted in autumn 2009.

Elements of the response build upon the motion submitted by ATL to the 2009 TUC Disability Conference, Increasing Life Chances for Disabled People through Education, Employment and Training. Data is also taken from the member response to ATL survey on disability equality in schools and colleges (July 2008).

Summary of key outcomes

- ATL believes that it is important to develop understanding of the options available – both in professionals in education and in young people and their families. Impartial and informed information, advice and guidance provision is essential and a training programme for staff in schools and colleges is required.
- We believe that both vocational and academic education are important. The existing divide between the two which politically-driven policy either promotes or does little to address has direct correlation to the capacity of some young people to avoid periods of being outside of education, employment or training. ATL advocates a skills-based curriculum which offers opportunities and interest to all young people and allows them to develop as learners and as people.
- The government's strategy for reducing the numbers of those not in education, employment or training must acknowledge the disadvantages faced by the disabled, young women, and those from black and ethnic minorities and seek to tackle arising problems specifically.
- Success will come for individuals and for society when a better understanding of why people are susceptible to enter the NEET category is achieved – by that for reasons of disability, geography, poverty or family, amongst others. The government must retain a long-term approach, not just a statistical focus, and should understand that education is not just about future contribution to the economy but personal development and benefiting society.
- For data to be most useful and challenges truly taken on, clarity is needed in a universal definition of what it means to be 'not in education, employment or training'. Furthermore, consideration should be made of the impact and negative connotations of using the label 'NEET'.

Glossary of acronyms

BME – Black and Minority Ethnic

IAG – Information, Advice and Guidance

ICT – Information and Communication Technology

NEET – those Not in Education, Employment or Training