



Career Connect: Connect 2 Final Report

April 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The-learning-crowd were commissioned to undertake a longitudinal study of Connect 2, a programme to support young people who are NEET, or at risk of becoming NEET across Greater Manchester. There were three key elements of the programme: non-regulated learning, regulated learning and progression to education, employment or training (EET). Evidence was gathered from sub-contractors, stakeholders and young people. A sample of 31 young people were interviewed during their time on the programme.

REVIEW OF CONNECT 2 PROCESS

Overall, the programme had run well. However, sub-contractors reported that there were some challenges in terms of resource to identify young people, and then to sign them up to the programme.

Non-regulated learning enabled advisers to offer intensive, wrap-around support in addition to careers advice. Advisers did find it difficult to allocate hours of non-regulated learning to young people on first meeting them.

Regulated learning was more challenging as it was a significant departure from the normal offer of sub-contractors. Sub-contractors worked to make it effective, and suited to young people's needs.

Progression options in most areas were perceived to be good. Recording of progression could have been more effective with longer periods allowed for young people to progress and softer outcomes being recognised.

Stakeholders reported that whilst they did not see an overall reduction in NEET numbers, solid relationships had been built between sub-contractors and other agencies or teams, which should lead to positive outcomes in the future.

The target number of sign-ups was reached, but not quite the target sustainment of progression. Non-regulated learning sign-up numbers were achieved, but regulated learning targets were not achieved, for a number of reasons.

Barriers to EET were reported as: practical, educational, personal and situational.

IMPACT

Non-regulated learning had the greatest impact. It was tailored to suit the specific needs of young people and enabled them to tackle practical, situational and personal barriers. Relationships with the adviser were important as most young people did not feel they were getting support elsewhere. They trusted their advisers and they became a positive influence in their lives.

Regulated learning enabled some young people to tackle educational barriers and gain a qualification, but it was not suitable for all. Some did not like the group work and others were not ready for any formal education as they had other barriers to tackle first.

Progression was positive for most of the young people who achieved it, especially when they received ongoing support from their adviser. For some young people their barriers were too large to overcome and others were not able to find the right opportunity for them, which meant that they did not progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for future programmes were made, including: recognising the complex needs of NEET young people, being flexible, prioritising non-regulated learning, including resource to engage young people, making accredited qualifications an option not requirement, allowing for different models of progression and measuring soft outcomes.

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION

1. 0 Background to Longitudinal Research

The-learning-crowd were commissioned in 2016 to undertake a longitudinal study of Connect 2, an ESF funded NEET Participation programme, run by Career Connect, and delivered across Greater Manchester by 8 sub-contractors.

- Oldham, Rochdale and Tameside (Positive Steps)
- Stockport
- Bolton
- Bury
- Wigan
- Manchester and Salford (Career Connect)
- Trafford
- Gingerbread (work exclusively with teenage parents)

The programme aims to help young people, aged 15 to 19 (upto 24 for young people with SEND) from the following priority groups:

- Young Offenders
- Lone or Teenage Parents
- In Care or Leaving Care
- ESOL needs
- Diagnosed emotional and / or mental health issues
- Elective home educated
- Unemployed and / or claiming job seekers allowance
- 18+ Unemployed and Not Claiming Benefits
- Lacking basic skills
- Learning difficulties, disabilities, and / or SEND
 - Autism
 - Severe emotional and behavioural issues
 - Potential Education and Health Care plan
 - Medical needs
 - Severe anxiety
 - Could benefit from a 'supported internship'

There are three key elements of the programme:

Non-regulated learning - young person is offered tailored support to meet their needs. Number of hours required are estimated in the initial meeting with the young person.

Regulated learning – where appropriate for them, young people are supported to complete an ESFA (formally SFA) approved course.

Progression - the young person is enabled to progress to education, employment or training, sustained at 3 and 6 months.

2.0 Literature Review

Research published by the DfE (2018) to highlight NEET characteristics suggests that those most likely to be NEET identify as one or more of the following: Looked After Children, those who have been in a Pupil Referral Unit or Alternative Provision, those who were excluded from school in KS3 or KS4, those with SEND, Children in Need, or those who had left school with no GCSE qualifications. This research supports the identification of these young people as being at risk and most likely to benefit from a programme such as Connect 2.

Research undertaken by the NFER (National Foundation for Educational Research) (Nelson et al, 2012) suggested that young people who were NEET fall into three categories:

Open to learning NEETs – young people most likely to re-engage in education or training in the short term and with higher levels of attainment and better attitudes towards school than other NEET young people.

Sustained NEETs – young people characterised by their negative experience of school, high levels of truancy and exclusion, and low academic attainment. They are most likely to remain NEET in the medium term.

Undecided NEETs – young people similar in some respects, such as their attainment levels, to those who are ‘open to learning’ NEET, but dissatisfied with available opportunities and their inability to access what they want to do.

Within the same NFER report, it identified that young people who were categorised as ‘sustained’ NEET are likely have multiple barriers and that they would benefit from high cost, one to one interventions, such as the support provided by the Connect 2 programme.

Within their research into health inequalities experienced by those who are NEET, Public Health England (2014) reported on what made intervention programmes successful. They suggested that successful strategies were based on early intervention (preferably pre-16), helped young people tackle wider barrier in their lives to entering EET, and that the programmes were evaluated to determine what made them successful. They reported that programmes were found to have the greatest impact when they were: flexible, personalised to individuals, were cross-organisational, contained an accredited element, were not like school and were delivered one to one or in small groups. These factors all correlate well with the Connect 2 programme structure.

At a more local level, a recent research report was undertaken as part of the Greater Manchester Talent Match programme (Edwards, 2017). The report identified “Hidden” young people, people aged 18-24 who are NEET and not in receipt of welfare support, and ways in which they could be helped. Many of the young people engaged within the Connect 2 programme are 15-18 year olds and are therefore not yet identified as hidden. There is a real opportunity for the Connect 2 programme to offer preventative support to young people, identified in the Greater Manchester area, before they are lost from the system. With the raised participation age requiring young people to participate in education or training up to the age of 18, the majority are still visible at the age they are being targeted by Connect 2.

Within the Greater Manchester Talent Match report, prevention was cited as one of the main recommendations for dealing with the issue of young people being NEET, and not visible to any services. Furthermore, the report recommends that those who are at risk of becoming NEET are engaged to offer them intensive careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG). Again, this supports the approach of Connect 2.

Overall, the literature review supports the need for Connect 2, and the young people that were identified as priority groups that the programme should benefit. The structure of the programme also aligns with the findings of the research into effective interventions to help encourage young people from being NEET into education, employment or training.

3.0 Methodology

To gather evidence, a mixed-method approach was taken, involving the following groups of people:

- Young people who have taken part in the programme.
- Programme leader / managers from each sub-contractor.
- Careers advisers working with young people.
- Stakeholders working with the sub-contractors e.g. local authority teams.

3.1 Programme Leaders / Career Advisers

To understand the effectiveness of the Connect 2 delivery, interviews with programme leaders or managers were conducted at the outset of the programme. Further conversations with these individuals, and careers advisers, have taken place during visits to each area and they were interviewed again at the end of the study. These conversations have enabled the specifics of the delivery approach taken in each area to be clarified.

3.2 Stakeholders

Stakeholders have been identified by each of the sub-contractors. These stakeholders include the following:

- RPA (Raising Participation Age) Lead
- 14-19 Commissioner (or equivalent)
- SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Lead/ Transition Manager (or equivalent)
- LAC (Looked After Children) Lead
- Leaving Care Lead
- YOS (Youth Offending Service) Manager
- Virtual School Lead
- Teenage Parent Lead
- Inclusion Lead with responsibility for behaviour and attendance / Education Welfare (or equivalent)
- Lead for young people with ESOL (English for Speakers of an Other Language)
- Key College / Training Provider Leads

All stakeholders were invited to complete a questionnaire about Connect 2. The focus of the questionnaire was the perception of the programme delivery in each area, and impact stakeholders feel the programme, and specific elements of the programme, have had for young people.

3.3 Young People

All young people on the programme were offered the opportunity to participate in the research. The quantitative and qualitative data gathered from young people was triangulated with evidence from advisers and stakeholders.

Sub-contractors were asked to send every young person an evaluation questionnaire once they have sustained progression for at least 3 months, or were signed off the programme. The questionnaire asked them about their perceptions of the programme, including the impact they believe it had, and the activities they felt made the biggest difference to them. 21 responses were received. Whilst a small sample, it provides support for the findings from qualitative data collected through interviews with a sample of young people and the performance data provided.

A sample of young people were selected from each area, to be part of a deeper analysis of the impact of Connect 2. A total of 31 young people were interviewed, covering all sub-contractors in May and June 2017. The majority of these young people were at the start of their journey on the programme. These young people were contacted again once

they had progressed or been signed off the programme, to determine how they are finding their progression destination, and how the programme helped them to get there.

The young people in the research sample faced a range of barriers, with some of them being part of more than one of the priority groups identified for the programme. All young people had some degree of mental health or wellbeing barriers to address, to get them into EET. Broadly speaking, the table below demonstrates the number of young people with vulnerabilities identified:

Vulnerable Group	Number of YP Interviewed
Looked after children / leaving care	4
Young Offenders	3
Lone or Teenage parents	3
Learning difficulties and / or SEND	13
Those facing ESOL barriers	1
Diagnosed emotional and / or mental health issues	5
Lacking basic skills	6
Elective home educated	5
At risk of becoming NEET	9
Unemployed and / or claiming job seekers allowance	24

It should be noted that a significant proportion of young people had left school before taking their GCSE examinations, for various reasons, and were listed as either NEET or at risk of becoming NEET, depending on their status. Another group within the cohort had started college or an apprenticeship, but had left the course or position as they did not think it was right for them. Although the number of young people with diagnosed emotional and mental health issues was reported as 5, on meeting young people it was clear that most of them suffered some emotional and mental health issues, even if not at the level of requiring diagnosis.

Within the initial interviews, young people were asked about the following:

- i) Personal: their own situation, how they heard about Connect 2, what made them want to sign up, and what they want to get out of it.
- ii) Aspirations: where they see themselves in one, five and ten years' time, what they need to do to get there and the perceived challenges.
- iii) Circles of Influence: who advises and supports them in relation to education and a career? How does Connect 2 and their careers adviser fit into that?

After having completed at least 3 months of progression, young people were asked the following:

- i) Activity: reflect and feedback on whole programme, including regulated and non-regulated learning, and what they feel they got out of each activity. What has had the biggest impact?
- ii) Progression: review of their progression destination. Are they happy? Is it the right option for them? How has it affected their 1 year, 5 year and 10 year plans?
- iii) Outputs: what have young people taken from the Connect 2 programme? In terms of personal development and collateral e.g. an improved CV, etc.
- iv) Distance Travelled: assessment of impact in relation to personal development and job / training readiness – with reference to immediate next steps.

From the young people interviewed, three were the subject of a slightly more in-depth study. For the last interview, they were visited, where possible, to get a full understanding of their situation and how the programme has contributed to that.

3.4 Additional Data

Additional data collected by the Career Connect team was also analysed to determine outputs of the programme, including the number of young people engaged and the number who completed the non-regulated and regulated learning and progressed, and how this compares with targets. Reasons for discrepancies between the targets and actual numbers, as identified in the longitudinal study, will be explored.

Case Study: Young Person K

When he joined the programme, K was studying for 4 GCSEs at an Alternative Provision. He had been arrested for dealing drugs and his family were very concerned that he would continue on this path in his future, if he did not have a more structured route to something more positive.

K had low levels of self-confidence, particularly in relation to education and a professional career. He found it very difficult to self-motivate and relied on others. He struggled with formality and rules, this affected his ability to engage with education in a formal setting.

His mother was particularly concerned and reported that K was not taking responsibility for his own actions and that he demonstrated a certain sense of entitlement, which made him unwilling to help himself. She also felt that without support he would end up dealing drugs again. She said *“K does not do anything to help himself. He goes to his [Alternative Provision] because his tutor picks him up in the morning. When he can’t come, K often doesn’t go.”*

K’s mother had found and contacted K’s Connect 2 adviser. She did not feel that he was willing to listen to his parents or grandparents when they encouraged him to think about, and take positive steps towards, his career.

At the start of the programme, K identified with his adviser that he would like a career as a barber. He was enthusiastic about this possibility and as a result was motivated to attend sessions with his adviser. He looked at other opportunities and increased his confidence and focus on what he wanted to do. He got to the point where he felt able to turn down an apprenticeship that was not in barbering, because it was not what he wanted to do and he did not feel it would make him happy.

K applied for and secured a position as an apprentice at a barber’s shop in his local area. He started on his apprenticeship with this employer, however it was not right for him. Whilst there, he identified a better barber shop, which would offer him the opportunity he wanted. He left his first apprenticeship, and started a new one.

Taking a second apprenticeship could not be recorded as a successful progression and sustainment. However, K had done well in the second barber shop, and they reported that they were very pleased with his attitude and work. For K, this was a successful outcome.

From a personal perspective, K was demonstrably more self-confident and assured after participating in the programme, and working at the barber’s shop. He reported that his adviser had really helped him determine what he wanted to do, made him believe that he could do it and then secure an apprenticeship. It was also through working on the programme that he had the confidence and awareness to see a more suitable opportunity and apply for it.

K spoke positively, and with pride, about his apprenticeship. He had made friends, who were positive role models and encouraged him to do well. He was happy undertaking basic tasks at work, like making tea and coffee and sweeping the floor, as he could see that this would lead to the career that he wanted. He was very pleased to be able to say he had already cut the hair of some of the people who worked in the shop. He said *“It’s great, I am really enjoying it. I definitely made the right choice and still want to be a barber. My adviser helped me to see that and get here. She was really helpful.”*

K said he would definitely recommend the programme to anyone else in his position.

SECTION B: REVIEW OF CONNECT 2 PROCESS

4.0 Effectiveness of Programme

4.1 Recruitment of Young People

Sub-contractors were positive about the potential of Connect 2 to provide the resource and opportunity to work with young people intensively, and offer additional support. They identified that the majority, if not all, the young people had the potential to progress and develop with appropriate support. As a result, sub-contractors reported that the majority of young people they met with were offered the programme and a large proportion were signed up.

However, sub-contractors identified some challenges with their sign-up targets. The main reason was resource required to identify and contact young people from the target groups. Sub-contractors who did not have existing caseloads of young people who were eligible, found recruitment more difficult than anticipated. With limited resource allowed in the contract for ground work to be undertaken, to identify and obtain contact details for young people, it proved challenging.

Sub-contractors had to identify potential sources of referrals and promote the service accordingly. They developed social media campaigns, attended events and shared details of the programme with potential partners including local authority representatives, healthcare professionals and third sector organisations working with young people from the target groups. This promotion was completed by advisers, which meant they had less time to deliver the actual programme. This became more of an issue as the programme progressed and they were simultaneously recruiting and working with the young people who had been signed up.

A further reported challenge was the resource required to sign-up a young person. Due to their personal circumstances, and often complex situations, time had to be spent with a young person to determine whether they would be suitable, whether it would benefit them, demonstrate to them why it would be beneficial for them to sign-up and obtain a commitment from the young person to participate in the full programme. Often first visits were reported to be home visits to meet young people, this is time consuming and affects the number of young people it is possible to identify and sign-up.

The final challenge cited in relation to sign-ups was overlap with existing provision, and a shortage of young people who were NEET, or at risk of becoming NEET, who qualified as one of the priority groups. Sub-contractors reported that in some areas there are providers offering support to certain groups of vulnerable young people, for example young offenders of those with SEND. It was not appropriate to target them and sign them up to this programme, if the alternative programme was more suitable. Sub-contractors also reported that they were not able to approach some usual partners for referrals as this programme was felt to overlap too much with their own.

As the programme progressed, sub-contractors identified key target groups to focus on and direct resource towards, as they were found to be an area of high need, for example, young people who were home schooled and had never, or not recently accessed, formal education. Another approach, taken by two sub-contractors, was to work directly with training providers and offer support to young people at risk of not completing the course, by preparing them in advance. This was positive as a progression destination was already identified and the anticipated result for training providers was that young people would be ready for the course and therefore more committed to completing it successfully. One sub-contractor formed links with a special school to support young people who were not going to have an EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan) until the age of 24, so were going to lose the associated support. The advisers worked with these young people help them identify next steps and support that was available to them to help them progress.

4.2 Non-regulated Learning

The majority of non-regulated learning was delivered as one to one support with an adviser. Some sub-contractors delivered group sessions or programmes and visits, others incorporated an element of work experience for some young people. However, these other activities supplemented the one to one support.

Most young people were allocated a designated adviser, who they met and worked with throughout the programme. This offered consistency and allowed a positive relationship to be fostered between the adviser and young person. Words like “trust” and “understanding” were frequently used by both young people and advisers to describe their working relationship.

Two of the young people interviewed reported that they had changed advisers. They felt that their new adviser was much more compatible with their personality and needs. They appreciated the opportunity to be allocated an alternative adviser, rather than having to remain with the one with whom they were initially paired. Young people also reported that when another adviser had specialist knowledge of a subject or area they were interested in, their own adviser brought that specialist in to work with them as a team. This was noted and appreciated by young people.

Sub-contractors reported that being able to offer one to one support suited the young people that they worked with as many of them struggled with group activities. One sub-contractor had found group activities successful, and continued to run a three-day goals programme as part of the non-regulated learning. Another sub-contractor, working with a framework of providers, was able to offer some non-regulated group activities, such as a media programme to help build confidence.

Sub-contractors reported that it was that it was difficult to predict in the first or second meeting, how much support that young person would need, particularly in relation to non-regulated learning hours. It was particularly difficult having set packages of hours to allocate, and only having a certain number of each. Advisers reported that this led to inflexibility as they were not able to simply allocate the number of hours that they felt were appropriate for a young person, if they had not got that profile of non-regulated hours left to assign. As it was not always easy to determine the number of hours, they sometimes over-estimated or had to allocate a profile of a high number of hours as this was all they had left available. Advisers did not want to ask young people to complete more non-regulated hours when they did not require them. It could have had a detrimental impact on young people’s perception of the programme if they felt that their time was being wasted. Equally, advisers felt that they could be using the time more effectively, with young people who needed their support more. Greater flexibility in the allocating of hours would have been preferred, and more meetings with a young person before determining how many hours would benefit them.

4.3 Regulated Learning

Overall, sub-contractors reported that it was more of a challenge to deliver the regulated learning, particularly if this was not something they had offered before. In many cases, advisers took on the role of delivering regulated learning. Whilst positive, as it extended their ability to work with young people, it meant that their offer was limited to entry level employability skills, or similar. Given the needs of young people who completed the regulated learning, this was generally appropriate, but not for all. In other areas partnerships were formed with organisations who could deliver the regulated learning. In some instances, this proved to be successful, but some sub-contractors struggled to make this arrangement work. This was because the pattern of young people signing up to the Connect 2 programme did not match the timescales of the partner organisations programmes.

Sub-contractors worked flexibly to deliver the regulated learning element of the programme. Some sub-contractors set-up courses on a rolling programme of self-contained sessions, so young people missing a session could catch it up and still complete the qualification.

Some sub-contractors found delivering the regulated element to groups of young people to be challenging as a number of the young people on their programme found it difficult to work in groups with their peers. Sub-contractors adapted their approach where they could, to suit the needs of young people, with some delivering regulated learning one to one. Conversely, other sub-contractors found that the group sessions worked so well, they used this approach for some of the non-regulated learning, as well as the regulated learning, and young people reported that they enjoyed the group sessions.

4.4 Progression

Sub-contractors reported that, in most areas, there was adequate and appropriate provision for young people. There were local further education providers offering courses that young people were interested in, and there was generally appropriate support available at those institutions. It was also felt that there were apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities local to most sub-contractors, particularly those close to a large town or city. Those in more economically deprived areas, or with fewer employment opportunities, reported that there were fewer options locally, and that young people had to travel further for work, education or training. For vulnerable young people, this was an additional barrier that they had to overcome.

In terms of outcome measures, it was felt that employment was given greater significance than education or training in the programme, as the payment for progression in to a job was more than that for progression into training or education. However, the jobs were often low skilled and low paid. Young people who were interviewed and went into employment all had aspirations to develop a career, usually in a different area to the one they were working. Getting a job was perceived to be a short-term solution to enable them to earn money. However, progressing into training or education provided young people with qualifications, skills and experience which increased the opportunities for them to move into higher quality employment. It is also fairly common that a traineeship will lead to an apprenticeship, but this was not reflected in the payment for progression, which only accounted for the traineeship.

Whilst progressing to education, employment or training were the key aims of the programme, there were outcomes reported in the longitudinal study which were very positive for the young people, but could not be recorded as results that qualified for payment. These outcomes are discussed to a greater extent in Section 3: Impact.

There were practical challenges associated with obtaining evidence of young people sustaining progression. This was particularly an issue when attempting to obtain written confirmation from small employers, as many did not have a company email address or headed paper, or the time and resource to provide confirmation that a young person had worked for them for a set period of time. Some flexibility in terms of what could be recorded as an outcome, and the evidence required from employers could have been beneficial.

The time constraints of the progression element were also challenging. For some young people, progression within 28 days was not possible, even if they were ready to take that step. For example, some had signed up for, and been accepted on to, courses in the spring which did not start until the September. They were ready to start, so would not have gained anything further from meeting with their adviser for more non-regulated learning. Others were not in a position to start training or employment due to their own life circumstances, even though they were themselves ready for that next step. For example, teenage parents who were waiting until their child turned two and could not start a course before because they were not able to access childcare. Greater flexibility in timescales for starting progression would have enabled young people in these situations, and others who just missed out on the 28 days by a few days, to qualify as having successfully progressed. It would have been a more effective recognition that the aim was progression and that taking a little longer to begin that was acceptable, if it enabled it to be achieved.

Most sub-contractors reported that they were able to offer ongoing support to young people once they had progressed. This was felt to be a positive aspect of the programme, as some young people took a while to settle in to

a new role, institution or way of learning and working. Having the resource and opportunity to continue to work with young people, to check that they were still attending and offer assistance if they were struggling, facilitated the sustainment of progression.

In summary, progression was a positive outcome but a model where there was equal weight given to education and employment, and consideration given to how positive progression is manifested, along with greater flexibility within the programme requirements, may have been more effective.

4.5 Stakeholders Feedback

Stakeholders were asked about their involvement in, and knowledge of, the programme. The extent to which stakeholders were involved appears to vary depending on their role, with some having closer links to the delivery of the programme. It also depends on the sub-contractor and how effective they were at engaging and communicating with stakeholders about the programme and impact.

Overall though, stakeholders reported that the delivery model was fixed when they were engaged, and that there was little opportunity for them to influence or have an input into what was required. As a result, it was perceived to be inflexible and rigid. Sub-contractors reported that there was some flexibility in how they delivered what was required at a local level, but only a few stakeholders said that they had any input in the development of the delivery model themselves.

Stakeholders felt that the programme enabled sub-contractors to help young people who were in need, but who did not qualify for other programmes or support. For example, they cited young people who had difficulties with learning, but who were below the SEND threshold to qualify for an EHCP (Education Health and Care Plan) and associated support, and those who did not have the knowledge or understanding to enable them to navigate options and access appropriate provision. It was noted by some stakeholders that they were involved in decision making about which vulnerable young people would benefit from the programme. However, other stakeholders felt that the rigid nature of the programme meant that there were some young people who would have benefitted from support, but who were not eligible. Others could not clearly comprehend how specific groups that they worked with would benefit from the programme, e.g. teenage parents who already received support, and for whom barriers to EET were systemic and not down to the individuals.

Overall, stakeholders were positive about the aims of the programme and the potential for it to help young people become economically active. They wanted the programme to tackle barriers that young people were facing to EET and to sustaining whatever education, employment or training option they selected. Many of the young people who were signed up had either left school before taking their GCSE exams, or had left a college course, apprenticeship or traineeship because it did not suit them. Stakeholders reported that they wanted positive outcomes for young people in terms of personal development, as well as enabling them to gain qualifications and sustain progression.

At an authority wide level, stakeholders wanted to see a reduction in the number of young people who were NEET in their own area. Analysis of the data for the north-west, released in October 2017, suggests that the number of young people who are NEET has only slightly decreased. The reason for only a small change has been attributed, in part, to requirements for young people to have qualifications in maths and English, and an associated lack of appropriate provision of EET. Some sub-contractors also reported difficulty in signing up young people who were already NEET, as the programme was not suitable for them, or they were not willing to sign up due to the commitment required. Therefore, some sub-contractors had focused on those at risk of becoming NEET, as opposed to those who were already NEET, which was positive but had less of an impact the short-term overall numbers of young people who were NEET.

Stakeholders from most local authority areas reported that communication from those leading the programme was very good. They were aware of the young people who were being signed up and had completed the programme. They were also aware of the activity that young people were involved in, and the required outcomes. However, some stakeholders reported that they did not really know about the programme. This depended upon their job role, with those who were not working directly with young people feeling that they were less informed. They reported that this was expected, and they knew who to speak to if they wanted to find out more about the programme. Stakeholders from some local authority areas reported being less informed than others, and would have liked more communication about the progress and impact of the programme from the sub-contractor.

Those stakeholders who reported that communication was good, also said that the programme had anecdotally had a positive impact upon young people accessing other support services. Being in regular contact with young people meant that advisers had a greater understanding of their needs and were able to earn the trust of the young person so that they were willing to consider referrals to other services. The advisers were also able to refer or recommend young people due to increased knowledge of what was available, and communication with other services about the programme.

One of the major positive outcomes for the programme for sub-contractors related to their relationship with stakeholders and local partners. Whilst they had worked with stakeholders and partners before Connect 2, it was reported that this relationship was often informal and that there was not always effective sharing of information about young people who could benefit from CEIAG. Through the programme, sub-contractors reported that they were able to build more robust relationships with stakeholders, encouraging referrals to the programme and referring young people to other services where they would be beneficial. Reports from young people involved in the longitudinal study support this. A number of young people were involved with other services and felt that what they got from Connect 2 complemented that support. They were tackling other barriers in their life with other stakeholders, but said they could begin to focus positively on their future with their Connect 2 advisers. Sub-contractors reported that they intended to maintain and build upon the positive relationships they had developed with stakeholders and partners within the programme.

5.0 Outputs from Programme

Outputs from the programme take into account the number of young people who completed each element, and their destination when they progressed. The impact of these outputs is discussed in Section 3: Impact.

At the point when the longitudinal study was completed, the number of sign ups was 3929, which was slightly below the revised target number of 4000. However, the target was almost achieved and this is a positive result.

The target for the number of young people progressing after being signed up was 71%. The proportion of progressions achieved, and meeting the 28 day requirement, at the time of the report was 53%. Some sub-contractors achieved between 60% and 70%. Based on the challenges and barriers faced by young people who were signed up to the programme, this is still a positive result, particularly as many of the young people who did not progress according to the terms of the contract, did benefit from the programme in other ways, as identified with young people who were involved in the longitudinal study.

There was a risk that with such a high progression target, those most in need of CEIAG and support would not be signed up to the programme as they were not as likely to progress and would therefore affect the ability of the sub-contractors to achieve their target. However, sub-contractors recognised the potential for the programme to have a positive impact for most NEET young people, therefore they opted to sign up all young people who could benefit, even if they had significant barriers to tackle.

The revised target for non-regulated sign ups was 4060, and this was achieved by sub-contractors. At the time of reporting, the non-regulated hours completion target had not quite been achieved. However, as the programme was still running it was anticipated that more completions would be recorded.

The target for regulated learning was 2415 completions, and 1656 were achieved. The number of young people who actually completed the regulated learning was considerably lower than the target number. Through the research, two main reasons for this disparity were identified.

The first was that delivery of the regulated learning element was more difficult for sub-contractors than providing CEIAG and related support, in which they had a great deal of expertise. As discussed in the previous section, partnering with other organisations to deliver the regulated learning had proven difficult for some sub-contractors as it did not align well with Connect 2 in terms of delivery timescales and the way in which young people were recruited to the programme.

The second reason was that regulated learning was not deemed to be appropriate for many young people on the programme due to their needs, or their disinclination to work with groups of their peers, as they found it difficult. Young people who were not committed to the regulated learning were less likely to finish this element of the programme, which affected the number of completions.

The revised targets for different types of progression, and achievements in relation to them, are listed below. These were correct at the end of March 2018. The programme was still running, so they are expected to change:

	3 Months Target	3 Months Achieved	3 Months % Achieved	6 Months Target	6 Months Actual	6 Months % Achieved
Employment	254	99	39.0%	118	53	44.9%
Education	1317	619	47.0%	655	342	52.2%
Apprenticeship	342	103	30.1%	195	66	33.8%
Traineeship	319	137	42.9%	n/a	n/a	n/a

This data shows that progressions across the board were not sustained in line with revised targets. Progression and sustainment in education and traineeships were closest to the target at 3 months, and sustainment at 6 months was greatest in education.

The output data highlights where the actual data differs from the target figures. However, the findings of the longitudinal research are able to provide some explanation as to why there are discrepancies, and why target numbers may not have been achieved.

NEET statistics from the duration of the programme were analysed. They reveal that across Greater Manchester there was a 0.4% decrease in NEET numbers from the start of the programme to January 2018. This is only a slight decrease, and is only slightly better than that reported nationally, suggesting the programme has not yet had a significant impact upon NEET statistics.

However, this was not the end of the programme, and some young people were yet to progress, so further analysis of the data needs to be undertaken once the programme has completed. Furthermore, the impact may manifest itself over a longer period than that of the programme and research. A review of the young people NEET in 12-months' time may reveal a greater impact of the programme. This is because benefits have been reported by the programme for young people that will increase their ability to access EET in the future, such as addressing barriers in their lives or providing them with the tools to search for and apply for opportunities.

6.0 Young People Engaged

6.1 Vulnerable Groups Identified

A key element of Connect 2 was the identification of vulnerable groups of young people who were NEET or at risk of being NEET and offering them appropriate support.

The vulnerable, priority groups identified were:

- Young Offenders
- Lone or Teenage Parents
- In Care or Leaving Care
- ESOL needs
- Diagnosed emotional and / or mental health issues
- Elective home educated
- Unemployed and / or claiming job seekers allowance
- 18+ Unemployed and Not Claiming Benefits
- Lacking basic skills
- Learning difficulties, disabilities, and / or SEND
 - Autism
 - Severe emotional and behavioural issues
 - Potential Education and Health Care plan
 - Medical needs
 - Severe anxiety
 - Could benefit from a 'supported internship'

Representation of each of the main vulnerable groups was included within the longitudinal sample, to determine the impact of the programme.

The longitudinal research, including the literature review, revealed that whilst these vulnerable groups are clearly disadvantaged in terms of securing EET, their barriers were not straightforward and specific to the vulnerable group to which they belonged. Young people from the longitudinal study, and beyond, belonged to multiple vulnerable groups. For example, a young man who had criminal convictions, and SEND, or the young woman who was a teenage parent and spoke English as an additional language. Furthermore, whilst some young people identified as having mental health and wellbeing issues but were not from any of the other vulnerable groups, those who were from one of the other vulnerable groups tended to also have mental health and / or wellbeing issues. This made their barriers to EET very complex. There were priority groups that the sub-contractors identified as being particularly in need as the programme progressed, and some chose to focus on these young people, for example elective home-educated and young carers.

For these reasons, sub-contractors confirmed that they did not work with young people from a specific vulnerable group in a standardised way. The only exception to this was the sub-contractor who worked solely with teenage parents. The approach to working with young people was tailored to their specific needs and the barriers they were facing, as the reasons for them being in a situation were varied.

6.2 Alternative Profiles of Young People

Research undertaken by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) highlighted three groups of NEET young people, which correlated well with the young people from the longitudinal study sample:

Open to learning NEETs – young people most likely to re-engage in education or training in the short term and with higher levels of attainment and better attitudes towards school than other NEET young people.

Sustained NEETs – young people characterised by their negative experience of school, higher levels of truancy and exclusion, and lower academic attainment than other NEET young people. They are most likely to remain NEET in the medium term.

Undecided NEETs – young people similar in some respects, such as their attainment levels, to those who are ‘open to learning’ NEET, but dissatisfied with available opportunities and their inability to access what they want to do.

Nelson et al, 2012

The majority of young people from the longitudinal research fall into the ‘sustained’ NEET category. A smaller, but significant number, would be classified as ‘undecided’. Those from the Open to Learning category would be unlikely to benefit from the programme as they are not really in need of much non-regulated or regulated support. They would be likely to find EET with some signposting and minimal CEIAG, and so are not included within this research.

Within the same NFER report, it identified that young people who were categorised as ‘sustained’ NEET are likely have multiple barriers, which we also observed within the research, and that they would benefit from high cost, one to one interventions, such as the support provided by the Connect 2 programme.

6.2.1 Profile 1: Undecided

These young people were over 17 and had chosen a route after finishing KS4. However, for various reasons, they had not been happy with their choice and had left. Their reasons related to not enjoying the way that the education or training was delivered or the subject matter, as opposed to not being ready to progress. Some felt that they needed additional skills, but the majority wanted guidance on next steps and the options available to them.

“I went to college and did mechanics after school. I don’t know why I chose it, guess I just didn’t know what else to do. I hated it though, so I left. I didn’t know what I wanted to do when I met my adviser, but now I’m thinking business studies or something to help me get a job in an area like that. I really like the sound of HR, but didn’t know what course to do for that.”

Young Person, Wigan

The barrier that these young people faced was a lack of support or direction. For the majority, the change in their career or training pathway was relatively significant, which is why they were unable to determine the route to take themselves.

“I went into sixth form after school, but didn’t like the subjects and wanted to do something more practical and less academic. I had decided I would like to get a job as cabin crew, but had no idea what to study to get that job.”

Young Person, Rochdale

These young people required less intensive support. It was mostly advice on available options and helping young people to apply for education or training. Regulated learning was likely to be focused on developing work skills that they could use in their future training and education or gaining relevant work experience to help them determine what direction they would like to take in their future career.

6.2.2 Profile 2: Sustained

The young people who would be categorised as sustained NEET had much more complex needs and faced multiple barriers.

“I’ve been kicked out of five different schools. Problem is they put you with other kids who’ve got issues too so it’s bound to kick off. And you can’t learn anything. I want to put all that behind me, work on my anger and get myself a job that I enjoy and keeps me busy.”

Young Person, Oldham

Further complexity comes from the difficulty of identifying cause and effect between barriers that they face. A simple example of this would be a young person who had been bullied and suffered from social anxiety, and whether the social anxiety had contributed to them being bullied, or was a result of them being bullied. The role of the adviser is to work through and understand the complexity of these multiple barriers to enable them to work with the young people effectively.

These young people ranged from age 15 to 22 and included young people from most of the vulnerable groups identified for support from the Connect 2 programme. Additional vulnerable groups were also identified, including young carers and young people who had disengaged from education before completing KS4.

“I’m 16 and haven’t been to school at all. I didn’t really learn at home, my Mum didn’t teach me to read or write. I didn’t really meet any people my age until a couple of years ago either so didn’t know how to talk to other kids.”

Young person, Bolton

The support offered to these young people is fourfold. They need help to address personal issues such as building confidence or tackling anger issues. This can be done through work with their adviser or through referral to other agencies. They also need practical support to deal with wider life issues, such as securing somewhere to live. Again, this will often be delivered with or by other organisations. The third type of support required is preparation for work of the individual, addressing issues such as reliability, attitude, taking responsibility for actions, etc. The last type of support is practical support and advice, including identifying options and helping with applications and CV preparation.

6.3 Barriers to Young People

From the longitudinal research, four main types of barrier were identified.

- Practical
- Education
- Personal
- Situation

6.3.1 Practical Barriers

Practical barriers include those which are preventing young people from accessing education, employment or training and can be directly tackled. They can include: a lack of knowledge about options, a lack of guidance or support to help young people identify options, appropriate provision not being available locally, accessibility issues, difficulty identifying and applying for opportunities, etc.

Other practical barriers may relate to a young person's situation and include financial barriers to taking a particular education or training route, or lack of access to facilities such as a computer and internet access.

6.3.2 Education Barriers

Not having the appropriate qualifications is a barrier to education, employment and training for some young people. These barriers are relatively straightforward, but vary in degree. A relatively large proportion of the young people interviewed reported that they had no formal qualifications. A number should have been in Year 11 and completing GCSEs, but had left school before completing KS4. Some had completed KS4, but still left with no qualifications. A small number of young people on the programme had had no formal education at all.

For young people without qualifications, this was a considerable barrier to accessing further education, training or employment that required them to have at least entry level qualifications. Most of these young people reported that they found it difficult to engage with formal education and they were very reluctant to engage with anything they perceived to be like school.

6.3.3 Personal Barriers

These barriers derive from mental health and wellbeing issues. Key personal barriers identified in the interviews were low levels of confidence in their own ability, anxiety about new situations and possible failure, low confidence in their own social skills or social anxiety, anger and not taking responsibility for things that happen to them.

Not taking responsibility for their own behaviour, and the impact of this, was observed in numerous young people, but was probably the barrier that they were least aware of themselves. Most young people were able to identify the other personal barriers to their own progression.

6.3.4 Situational Barriers

Situation barriers refer to elements of the young person's circumstances or life that are affecting their ability to engage with education, employment or training. Many of these directly relate to the reasons they were identified as vulnerable groups. These barriers include: chaotic and stressful family situations, being a young carer, drug and alcohol dependence, being looked after or having left care, teenage pregnancy, SEND, homelessness, and being young offender or at risk.

These are the most complex of barriers, and for the most part require work with other organisations or agencies to assist young people, in addition to their participation in the Connect 2 programme.

Case Study: Young Person S

At our first meeting S was very negative about her future. She had limited qualifications and low self-esteem and confidence. She had some learning difficulties, which had contributed further to her significant lack of motivation since leaving college.

Whilst at school and college, S had received a lot of support. She also had support at home from her mother, who she felt was a positive role model with a good work ethic. However, she did not know how to re-motivate herself and get back into EET. This was a self-fulfilling situation with S feeling worse the longer she was not engaged in EET, and as a result becoming less able to motivate herself to rectify the situation.

S reported that the Job Centre staff were helpful in offering her opportunities, but she was not getting additional support to her get to a position where she was able to access these. She needed additional wrap around support, not just information. A further practical barrier to S was her lack of access to the internet, which made it difficult to search for and apply for jobs.

At the start of the programme, S was very negative about her future opportunities. She said *“People say you can do anything you want, but it’s not true.”*

She was very clear that she did not feel that many opportunities were open to her, and that she would not like the jobs she would be offered.

When asked about what she would ideally like to do, S said her immediate priority was to get paid work, but ultimately she wanted to work for someone like the Dogs Trust. She felt that getting a job working with dogs was too difficult as it was niche and required qualifications and experience that she did not have. She could not see a way of getting these qualifications and they felt too far out of reach to her.

S worked well with her adviser. She came into the centre regularly to both meet with her adviser and use the IT facilities. Having access to them meant she was able to search for jobs and complete her CV, with the assistance of her adviser. She was able to get dedicated help with areas she felt she needed, particularly interview skills.

S has now progressed into full time employment. She wanted a job which had an element of customer service and she has achieved this and is working full time at an amusement arcade. S had sustained her employment for 3 months but was considering looking for an alternative job. She did not feel that she was treated fairly and wanted to work for a different employer. She recognised that she was in a much better position to do that, with some demonstrable work experience and a good reference. Her employer reported that S was doing very well, and they were pleased with her work, attitude and reliability.

S demonstrated much improved motivation and self-confidence, which she attributes to the programme. S was very positive about the support that she been given by her adviser. She said that he made her feel positive about the future. *“My adviser made me believe that I can do anything I want, if I put my mind to it. He gave me hope for the future and a positive outlook.”*

S reported that she would still like to get a job working with dogs in the future and she feels that this is something she is able to look into in the future, in line with the 5-year plan that she described.

SECTION C: IMPACT

7.0 Impact of Non-Regulated Learning

The non-regulated element of the programme allowed sub-contractors to offer additional support to that which they provide through their standard CEIAG. The resource of the programme enabled them to extend their valuable work and offer more wrap around support to young people. This meant that sub-contractors could extend the positive impact of their CEIAG, using their expertise and the resource to support them.

7.1 Tailored Support

As a result of the programme, advisers were able to spend more time with young people, and offer more intensive support. Quality time with young people enabled advisers to identify their needs and barriers, and tailor support to benefit that young person as a result. This level of support was very important for young people with multiple and complex barriers. Quality time and additional support was required to address them.

For example, one young person from the longitudinal study did not feel able to travel independently before starting on the programme. Through working with his adviser, who travelled with him initially, he was able to build his self-confidence and travel into the town centre himself on public transport. In terms EET, this is a significant step as not being able to travel independently would have prevented this young person from accessing most provision.

"I stopped going to school when I was bullied and I learnt at home. I have special needs and couldn't get the bus by myself. [My adviser] helped me by catching the bus with me a few times, and now I can come in to town by myself. That means I can get a job in town as I can travel here."

Young Person, Manchester

Non-regulated learning was successful due to the ability of advisers to tailor the provision to the needs of the young people. As noted, many of the young people on the programme faced complex barriers to accessing EET, and therefore needed multi-faceted support to tackle them. Having the time to get to know young people, and being able to tailor the approach, meant that advisers were able to provide the right support. A standardised approach would not have enabled them to offer appropriate support to suit the young person they were working with.

7.2 Barriers Addressed

Through the non-regulated element of the programme, young people were offered support to address practical, and situational barriers. This was clearly recognised by young people in the longitudinal study. Beyond the standard CEIAG, young people reported that their adviser was able to help them address other practical barriers that were preventing them from accessing EET, such as identifying ways to resolve housing issues or assisting with applications for benefits to which young people were entitled. They were also able to help young people address situational barriers by identifying the negative impact of the situation and showing young people alternatives.

Young people in the longitudinal study reported that these barriers could often be so significant, that they were unable to even contemplate EET whilst they were still present in their lives. For example, a young person who had a very difficult relationship with his family worked with his adviser on how to distance himself from the situation when it became negative and engage with his family on his own terms in a more positive way. Without this constant negative impact, he was able to start thinking more about his career and education.

“I have lots of stuff going on at home and lots of things going on in my life. I get stressed and angry. [My adviser] came to meet me and said I could talk to her about stuff. When I come in, I can concentrate on getting a job. She’s also helping me deal with all the stuff at home when I’ve got head space being somewhere else.”

Young person, Stockport

Advisers were able to use the resource and extra time that Connect 2 provided them with, to help young people address practical and situational barriers, so they were in a position to consider their future.

Non-regulated learning also enabled advisers to help young people tackle personal barriers. As noted, the majority of young people on the Connect 2 problem had some form of mental health or wellbeing issues. Being able to spend quality time with a young person, and identify these issues, as well as the reasons for them, meant advisers could find strategies to address them. For example, one young person who had speech and language difficulties as a result of social anxiety. It took a number of non-regulated hours with her adviser, working on strategies and building her confidence, but she was able to speak to her adviser as a result. This in turn enabled her to believe that she was capable of accessing EET, and she has since started a higher education course, which she has successfully sustained.

“When I started, I could only speak to my boyfriend and my cat. I was really worried about going to Uni, meeting new people and not being able to talk to them, especially in halls. Working with [my adviser] and the rest of the group I have been able to start talking a little. I feel more ready for Uni now, and have applied for September.”

Young Person, Bury

7.3 Further Impact

Young people identified non-regulated learning as having an impact upon their engagement in, and sustainment of progression. Working with their adviser one to one allowed them to explore different opportunities which may suit them. They were also able to complete work experience or take part in short programmes through non-regulated learning, and this helped them gain an understanding of what they might like to do in their future career, and helped them to learn how to take, and demonstrate, personal responsibility.

7.4 Relationship with Adviser

Key to the success of the non-regulated learning was the relationship between young people and their adviser. All young people who were part of the longitudinal sample were very positive about their adviser and the impact that they had upon their lives. Trust, respect and support were three words which were mentioned frequently by young people when talking about their adviser. Many young people reported that prior to meeting their adviser, they had not received advice or support from anyone else. The young people who had left school during year 11 reported that they had had little contact from their school, and no advice on what they should do next in relation to EET.

“I don’t want to go to college, I am too nervous. Mum thinks I’ll be ok when I get there. So I will seeing my coach and he is going to help me get help at college, so I’m not as worried.”

Young Person, Wigan

A number of young people were working with another agency, and those with complex barriers were working with multiple agencies. Some young people reported that the assistance they were getting to address barriers from these other agencies was effective, but that they were not getting support with accessing EET, so working with their adviser complemented the other provision. Other young people were not positive about the support they were getting from other agencies, and reported that their adviser was the first person who had listened to them and was helping them to achieve what they wanted, rather than telling them what they were capable of, or not.

“I was working with lots of people and services. 22 at one point. They never helped me and I just got angry with them so I kicked off and they left me alone. [My adviser] listens to me. She makes me feel better and more positive about the future.”

Young person, Stockport

The majority of young people from the sample reported that their adviser had become an influential person in their life.

7.5 Conclusions on Non-regulated Learning

The non-regulated learning was found to have a positive impact on young people, and this was identified by both young people and sub-contractors. Young people reported that the support they were given through non-regulated learning, gave them the tools and ability to determine what they wanted to achieve in their career, and steps they needed to take to achieve that. They were empowered.

Young people reported that the non-regulated learning had the biggest positive impact upon them and their access to EET. They felt that it had removed barriers and provided them with the skills and self-confidence to find employment, education or training in the immediate future, but also equipped them to progress in their careers in the future.

8.0 Impact of Regulated Learning

Whilst many young people felt that the regulated learning had a positive impact upon them, the impact was not reported to be as great as the impact of non-regulated learning. Many young people did not complete, or even sign up to the regulated learning. Those who did benefit from the regulated learning were generally those who had moderate, but not severe, educational barriers to overcome.

8.1 Relevance of Regulated Learning

There were various reasons that the regulated learning was not found to have had a very positive impact on all young people who were signed up. The main reason was that it was not suitable or appropriate for all young people. Some had qualifications from school or equivalent, or had completed an apprenticeship, and therefore did not need further qualifications to progress. Their barriers to EET were not ones that could be addressed by the regulated learning offered through Connect 2.

For others, the regulated learning was not suitable for as they were not ready to access any form of structured learning because they had multiple and complex barriers to address first. For example, a young person who had a 2-year old child, a chaotic home life, insecure housing and spoke English as an additional language. Regulated learning was not suitable for this young person as she was very difficult to engage, therefore she did not attend consistently and found it difficult to focus and commit. She benefitted more from the one to one non-regulated learning, which she engaged with effectively.

“I haven’t got a job yet but like working with [my adviser]. It’s been difficult as lots of things have been happening to me. But I keep coming in to see her and she has helped me with lots of things, like getting benefits and hopefully a place to live. When I’ve got a house I can get a job and know [my adviser] will help me.”

Young Person, Bolton

For the young people who had other barriers to address, regulated learning may be beneficial in the future, but it was likely to be beyond the timescale of the programme.

8.2 Barriers to Regulated Learning

The delivery of the regulated learning was perceived negatively by some young people, and prevented them from deriving benefit from this part of the programme. In particular, many young people did not like having to undertake regulated learning in a group with their peers. As noted, mental health and wellbeing issues affected most of the young people on the programme, to some extent. These issues meant that young people could struggle with social interaction, particularly if they suffered from a lack of self-confidence, social anxiety and / or anger issues, all of which were reported by young people in the longitudinal study.

“I was bullied at college, so I dropped out. I’ve worked on my confidence with [my adviser] but still feel worried about meeting new people. I want to speak to new people and am getting there but didn’t want to be in a group yet.”

Young Person, Oldham

Whilst they were working on these issues with their adviser in the non-regulated learning, they had not always got to the point of being able to work effectively with other young people. If the regulated learning was felt to be suitable for a young person, but that the group work was a barrier, some sub-contractors delivered regulated learning on a one to one basis. However, this was not efficient and could not be offered to all young people as there was not the resource to support it.

The more formal nature of the regulated learning was a barrier to some young people, who had struggled with formal education previously. A number of young people in the longitudinal research had left school before completing KS4 as they had not been able to engage with formal education. For these young people, any form of formal education was perceived negatively, and they were disinclined to participate. As a result, they did not really derive any benefit from the regulated learning and often missed sessions or did not complete the course. It was not the content of the course, which many young people reported was useful, but the way in which it was delivered. A less formal approach to teaching the important skills may have had a more positive impact.

8.3 Positive Impact of Regulated Learning

Despite the challenges associated with regulated learning, there were many young people for whom it did have a positive impact. As the regulated learning was usually delivered by a range of advisers, or by partner organisations, the regulated learning gave young people the opportunity to obtain support from another professional. For example, one young person reported that he had a lot in common with the mentor from the partner organisation delivering the regulated learning. Whilst he felt able to talk to his own adviser, his mentor from the regulated learning became a role model for this young person, and inspired some of the decisions he made about his future career.

“I really like [my tutor]. He’s a sound guy and really interesting. I learn lots from him and hope I can like him in the future. I’d like to do tutoring like him.”

Young person, Wigan

A number of young people reported that the group element of the regulated learning was a positive for them, as opposed to a negative. They found meeting other young people who were similar to them, or were facing similar challenges, helped them and had a positive impact upon them. They did not feel like they were the only ones facing barriers to accessing EET. Peer to peer support encouraged and motivated them. For example, one young person who was a teenage parent reported that she felt people judged her for her situation and having a child so young. This had had a dramatic impact upon her self-confidence and was a significant barrier to her accessing EET. She reported that the group regulated learning sessions, with other teenage parents, made her feel much less isolated and helped her regain some of her self-confidence through the support she received from her peers.

"I am usually quiet as I think people judge me. But I liked the group work and felt comfortable speaking out and joining in. The others in the group made me think doing it [Connect 2] was a good idea and would help me."

Young person, Manchester

The actual course itself had a positive impact for some young people, as gaining the qualification helped them to access EET. That might be because achieving the qualification was a condition of court orders, or was a condition of their application to further education or training being accepted. It allowed those young people, without any other formal qualifications, to demonstrate their ability to learn and achieve. Completing the regulated learning also enabled young people to demonstrate personal responsibility, including commitment and reliability. Young people who wanted to progress into formal education, but had struggled with it previously, were able to learn how to engage with it effectively through the regulated learning, so they were more prepared when they progressed. The regulated learning had a positive impact as it was a practical means to enable some young people to start on the path towards their goal.

8.4 Conclusions on Regulated Learning

The impact of the regulated learning was not as great as the impact of the non-regulated learning for young people. This appears to be due to the greater number and diversity of barriers that could be tackled by non-regulated learning, and that all young people could benefit from it. The regulated learning was beneficial to those with some educational barriers, who needed a qualification and to develop their learning skills to progress, but who were not experiencing other complex barriers to EET. Those for whom formal education was very challenging, found it too difficult to engage with the regulated learning, so it did not help them tackle their educational barriers, such as a lack of qualifications. For those young people who did not have educational barriers, the regulated learning element did not offer them anything that would help them progress into EET, therefore it had little impact for them.

9.0 Impact of Progression

Sub-contractors were positive about the impact of progression and rated this as being the element which had the greatest impact, as the objective of Connect 2 was to progress young people into EET and help them sustain it.

9.1 Barriers to Progression

Young people were also positive about the progression, but to a slightly lesser extent than the sub-contractors, and they felt that it had less impact than the non-regulated learning. This is in part due to some young people not achieving progression. Those who did not progress during the programme reported that this occurred for a number of reasons. Some young people were not able to overcome their barriers, despite the support they were offered, within the timeframe or scope of the programme. This was generally because their challenges were so complex, or additional issues arose during their time on the programme. For example, one young person had received serious threats of violence which escalated whilst he was on the programme. Whilst he continued to engage, it was inconsistent and he struggled to motivate himself when the threats were received, retreating into his own bedroom and not wanting to leave as he felt unsafe.

"I am worried that [young person] stays in bed all day and does nothing. When he was meeting [his adviser] he did more and was looking for work. I have asked [his adviser] to get back in touch because I think it's the only way to get him a job."

Mother of young person, Trafford

9.2 Satisfaction with Progression Destination

Other young people did progress but found that their chosen destination did not suit them. Many had found other destinations, and reported that the work they had done with their adviser was an integral reason for them being able to find an alternative. However, this was not recorded as a sustained progression, so it was not recorded within the programme.

Of the young people who did progress, most were happy with their choice. As noted, some changed their destination, but generally stayed with the same field, just with a different employer or provider. In the instances where young people were not happy, it tended to be because their destination was not quite how they imagined it would be, or something significant happened in their lives.

“I worked with [my adviser] to get to college. I went to a business course. But something happened in my life so I had to leave. I did like it though, so I can go back when I get stuff sorted out. [My adviser] was really helpful and I can use what she told me again.”

Young person, Wigan

The provision and resource for advisers to continue to work with young people once they had progressed had a positive impact where it was deployed. Young people who were unsure of their chosen destination felt more positive, and reported higher levels of resilience, if they were still in contact and receiving support from their adviser. Even those who were not continuing to receive support were positive about their future prospects, due to the skills and confidence they had been given by their adviser through non-regulated learning.

9.3 Impact on Future Career Goals

Young people in the longitudinal study discussed their mid-term and long term goals in relation to their careers and lives. The young people who had progressed to education or training still appeared to be taking steps towards the broad career area in which they had expressed an interest. However, those who had moved into employment seemed less focussed on their long term career goals and had not done anything more to move themselves towards these goals outside of their job. For example, one young person expressed an interest in animal care as a future career, however her short term goal was to find paid employment. She had secured a job in catering, and whilst she was doing well and had sustained it for 6 months, she was not enjoying it. However, she had not done anything to move herself more towards her future goal of working in animal care. She had arranged to meet with her adviser again, which demonstrates her belief in the positive impact of the programme.

9.4 Conclusions on Progression

One of the reasons young people may not have been as positive about the impact of progression is that they did not appreciate the future benefits it could bring. Whilst they may not have enjoyed the job that they had taken, by successfully sustaining it they were gaining skills and demonstrating reliability and a positive work ethic that would help them secure future employment or a place on a course or apprenticeship, with a good reference to support them. The sub-contractors recognised the benefit of this and were also aware that those who were in EET were less likely to be NEET in the future than those who progressed to NEET.

Case Study: Young Person L

L was electively home educated and had not been in formal education, other than a short period in KS1. He had not received any formal education at home and was unable to read and write at the age of 16. In addition to being unable to read and write, L had not had the opportunity to develop the social skills of a young person his age. He reported that he did not really associate with any young people outside of his own family. L's family situation was difficult. He had a strained relationship with one of his siblings and his mother.

L had expressed a desire to do something positive with his future and access EET. His mother found Connexions and he was identified as being suitable for the Connect 2 programme. L was keen to engage as he felt it was a way to get where he wanted. He said *"I need the keys to my future and I hope this programme will do that for me. Until now, I feel my Mum had those keys and was stopping me from unlocking the box to my future."*

During the programme, L met regularly with his adviser and engaged well. He was referred to the ETP (Education Training Partnership) to develop his numeracy and literacy. L was positive about his advisers and the support they gave him. He felt empowered and that more possibilities were opened up to him. L felt saw his advisers as positive role models and felt that they had qualities he wanted to emulate. He was excited about starting college.

However, as he became more aware of his situation, his level of frustration with his parents, and particularly his mother grew. He started to feel angry that he had been denied access to formal education and increasingly began to notice that his social skills were not well developed. It led to him feeling a little apprehensive about going to college and mixing with his peers. He was concerned about not being able to make friends.

L successfully completed the Connect 2 programme and progressed to college to study entry level Maths, English and ICT. Overall, he liked the course and had good attendance. His tutors were pleased with his level of engagement and attainment.

However, L was somewhat frustrated by the pace of learning, having previously been working at his own pace with ETP. He was also frustrated by the attitude to learning of his peers, who he felt often did not take the course seriously and were therefore disruptive to others on the course, including L. The ongoing support he had from his adviser helped him deal with this, as he was encouraged to persevere so that he could gain a qualification. He said *"Sometimes my course feels like a bit of a waste of time, as people mess around and we don't get to move as fast as I would like. But I spoke to [my adviser] and she reminded me that it's important to get a qualification so I have a lot more choice in my future."*

Following his conversation with his adviser L spoke to his tutor and had been given an extra project to work on, which had made him much happier.

L remains positive about his future and talks about a vast range of areas he wants to consider. For the first time, he sees all the possibilities available to him, so wants to explore a number of them before deciding what career path he wants to follow. He has mentioned the armed forces and also that he wants to develop his own pedagogical approach to teaching other young people who have come from a similar situation to his own.

L understands that he still needs to work on his social skills, but they have improved significantly through the programme, and by going to college. He was extremely positive about the Connect 2 programme, saying *"It has changed my life."*

10.0 Young People from Longitudinal Study

A has SEND and had left college after having a difficult time there. She had tried another programme but not enjoyed it or found it helpful. Her college tutor recommended contacting Connect 2 advisers.

A was really positive about the advisers she worked with and felt that she could talk to them and open up. She also learnt new skills through work experience to benefit her CV.

Due to issues in her personal life, A left the programme before progressing. However, she has since obtained paid work in a café. She did not link Connect 2 to her getting her job, but reported that working with her advisers had helped increase her confidence and she had really enjoyed her time there.

K is selectively mute and lacked confidence in her ability to go to university to study for a degree in the arts.

She had secured a place at University but was nervous about how she would cope, both with the course and life as a student in halls. She wanted help from Connect 2 to prepare her, and ensure she was able to go to University and succeed.

K increased her confidence through Connect 2 and felt equipped to attend University. She was even able to speak to her adviser after working with her. This was a significant step.

She has started her course at University and sustained it, with some pastoral support secured through her adviser.

C has SEND and has been working with his adviser for a while. He had tried other programmes but did not feel comfortable there. After being bullied at school as well, C had low confidence levels and was not able to travel independently.

C enjoyed working with his advisers one on one, and this helped him complete work experience and learn how to work with others.

Through the programme C gained skills and certifications. He is able use the bus by himself. He has also secured employment as an assistant in an office. Connect 2 gave him the self confidence to get the job, along with help to find and apply for jobs and demonstrate capability via work experience.

S had not really obtained any qualifications at school but had started a plumbing course at college. He did not enjoy the course so left, but he did not know how to move on from that.

He was referred to Connect 2 by the job centre. He worked well with both his adviser and regulated learning provider, which helped him identify what he wanted to do, and how to secure a place at the right college on a business management course.

Unfortunately, S did not sustain his place at college due to issues in his personal life. He reported that his adviser had been so supportive, that he felt like he had let her down. But he also felt more prepared and has the confidence to apply for an apprenticeship in the future.

A had anxiety, very low self-confidence and found it difficult to communicate with people. She had struggled with school as a result and was being home educated. She had received no CEIAG, but thought that she would like to work with dogs.

Through the programme, A increased her self-confidence and managed to complete work experience at a pet shop. Gaining her regulated learning qualification increased her self-belief and she recognised that she needed to build upon her foundation skills further.

A applied to college but was very nervous about going. Working with her adviser, she was able to tackle her fears and attend on the first day. Without Connect 2 it is unlikely she would have gone.

K was successful at school and obtained 11 GCSEs. He started a college course but became homeless whilst studying, so left the course.

When he joined Connect 2, K had secured accommodation but did not know how to get his career back on track. He said that other support he had been offered was too slow and not especially career focused.

He enjoyed the programme and felt he got a lot from both the regulated and non-regulated learning, as it got him back into the mindset of employment and employability skills.

He was able to identify a path to obtaining the career he wanted, and completed a Prince's Trust course to further prepare himself for an apprenticeship.

J had struggled at his previous school due to behaviour issues. He had recently moved to the area but was not enrolled in school. He should have been in year 11.

His family were supportive, but he did not know what steps to take to get into his field of interest, motor mechanics. His adviser was the only person who got in touch to offer support. He wanted his move to the area to be a fresh start and saw Connect 2 as being something that could help him.

He rated his adviser as being an important influence in his life, showing him what he could achieve and offering practical help. As a result he successfully applied for, and was accepted on to, a sought after motor vehicle traineeship, which he has sustained.

B was not engaging with other agencies and reported that he was not receiving any support, having left school in year 11. He had very poor attendance, low motivation and was registered with the Youth Offender Team.

Initially, B had low confidence and, although he expressed an interest in doing something with his future, he had no clear idea about what that might be.

He engaged well with his adviser and the regulated learning, although he did not complete the course. Given his attendance levels were 7% before, it is an achievement that he engaged well with the programme. Working with his adviser, B determined that he wanted to be a plasterer and secured a place at college.

J had chosen to start an A level course, but did not enjoy it. He only applied for 6th form college as that is what everyone else was doing. When he realised it was not suited to him, he did not know what his options were.

J spent a lot of time working with his adviser to determine what career he wanted. His adviser helped him secure work experience placements to try out different types of work.

He decided he would like a career as cabin crew. With his adviser, he secured a place on a course in hospitality, and has a part time job in a pub to gain the work experience he requires. Without Connect 2 he did not feel he would have reached the position of knowing what he wanted to do with his future.

P gained qualifications at school and started college. However, she suffers from social anxiety and was bullied which significantly affected her confidence. She also disliked the course so left college.

P wanted to start a course more suited to her, but she was negatively affected by her previous experience of college.

Working with her adviser enabled P to address her social isolation and confidence levels. She completed work experience and was supported to regain her independence.

She demonstrated greatly improved social skills as a result of her work on the programme, has sustained a place on an art course at college, where she has made new friends.

J was on a Skills Company programme but was at risk of becoming NEET as she did not find it helpful. She had completed a nursery placement and gained some qualifications, but had not been able to take it further. J has anxiety and had low levels of self-confidence.

J found regulated learning more useful than her previous programme. She worked with her adviser to build confidence and find opportunities.

J applied for a number of apprenticeships and courses and received positive feedback. However, she had not been able to secure an appropriate progression within the programme. She did report that she felt much more confident and resilient, and was motivated to keep applying.

J attended specialist provision after issues with violence at school. He was diagnosed with ADHD and was working with the Youth Offending Team. He reported substance abuse and anger issues.

J engaged well with the programme and found it useful, even though he struggled with formal education. He felt empowered to take control of his life, and the programme gave him a positive outlook on his future, which he did not have at the start.

As a result, he appears to have tackled his substance abuse and now manages his anger better. He still struggled to complete elements of the programme, due to personal issues, but he was working on himself and on progressing into employment.

M became a parent aged 16 and spoke English as an additional language. She liked school, but left when she had her child. M had complex family issues and insecure housing.

M met regularly with her adviser and began to tackle many of the multiple barriers preventing her progression to EET, such as securing housing and benefits.

M's circumstances worsened. However, she continued to engage with her adviser, who was an important source of support to her. She remained positive and proactive about her future due to the programme, but did not progress to EET. She has since started a traineeship. Although this could not be recorded as a progression within the programme, her ability to secure it was attributed to Connect 2.

L had very low levels of literacy and numeracy. He had not attended secondary school, and did not receive any formal education at home.

L worked with his adviser and completed regulated learning to acquire entry level English and maths. He was proactive and engaged with the programme. It provided him with positive role models and gave him control over his future, which he did not feel that he had had previously.

The support from his advisers also enabled him to address other barriers to EET, including difficult family relationships.

As a result of the programme, L progressed to a full-time college course, which he has sustained, and has high aspirations for his future.

D had suffered bereavement and as a result had low attendance at school for 2 years. He had started to attend school again part time and was privately fostered. He felt in a position to consider EET, but had not engaged with the CEIAG provision at school.

D was tackling his personal barriers with other agencies and specifically wanted to focus on his career with his adviser. She was able to tailor the support to suit D's needs and help him determine what path he wanted to take, and to secure an apprenticeship.

D started an apprenticeship and, despite further changes to his personal circumstances, had successfully sustained his progression, suggesting that he had found the right progression, which offered him stability.

R had started studying A levels, but did not feel it was right for her, so she left. She was very uncertain about what career path she wanted to follow, and that was making her upset and anxious.

R spent time with her adviser exploring multiple options. When R joined the programme, she was interested in a career in quantity surveying, but was not convinced that this was really what she wanted to do. She appreciated the opportunity to explore different options, supported by someone with the expertise to help her.

R progressed to a hairdressing apprenticeship, and was successfully sustaining it, as she had found something she enjoyed.

Y had very low confidence, having been the victim of bullying and violence in the area he was living. He had moved to get away from the violence, and wanted to obtain employment and work towards a career in music. However, he lacked motivation.

Y engaged well for a while and met with his adviser to look at options. But his negative experiences limited his options as he was reluctant to engage in any EET with other young people.

Due to the impact of the violence on his confidence and motivation, he stopped engaging and did not progress. He had become more withdrawn and was not really leaving the house. His adviser continued to stay in touch to encourage him to re-engage.

R was receiving support from the Youth Offending Team and had a young child, who he was not seeing. He had left school with no qualifications.

R had low self-esteem and came across very shy and defensive. He was not sure what career he wanted, but knew he'd prefer something practical rather than office based.

Despite experiencing further setbacks, R continued to engage with his adviser. Through working with his adviser and other agencies, he increased his self-confidence considerably.

Although he did not progress through Connect 2, he was much more positive about his future and when he was interviewed for the research, confirmed that he was attending college.

A was a young carer and had not attended school for two years as a result. She was electively home-educated, but was not expected to get any formal qualifications.

A had high aspirations for her future, but had not considered them in detail due to her situation. She had also not considered how she could re-engage with EET whilst still being a full-time carer.

When engaging with her adviser, A was very positive and was proactive. However, she stopped engaging due to a significant change in her circumstances when she became pregnant, so she did not complete the programme.

She could not be reached to participate in longitudinal study after the first meeting.

D had no formal qualifications and was feeling very negative about his future when he met his adviser. He had low confidence and was nervous about meeting new people.

He had ideas about areas he'd like to work, e.g. construction, as he wanted a profession which was practical. He had not found support elsewhere to help him get back into EET.

Connect 2 enabled him to find appropriate opportunities and apply for them. He also took part in activities which had helped him improve his self-confidence, including group sessions and visits. Whilst he did not progress on the programme, he was still looking for a suitable apprenticeship and was positive about finding one.

S had been unemployed for some time and was feeling very negative about her future. She said she would like to get a job to earn money for herself, but had a long term interest in a career working with animals. S was not very motivated to find and apply for work and found interviews difficult.

S said that the non-regulated learning made her feel more positive. She benefitted from help with interview skills and her confidence was increased by activities like attending job fairs.

S secured employment in a catering role, but she was not really enjoying it. However, she recognised that she was gaining experience to add to her CV, which would help her get another job.

P was a teenage parent, leaving care and had issues with housing. She had previously had support from her adviser, and trusted them to help her.

Her adviser offered her advice and helped her tackle a range of issues, including securing housing, to enable her to re-engage with EET. P said she could talk to her adviser, when all other support seemed to be withdrawn, as she turned 21.

P completed the regulated learning and liked that childcare was provided in the adjacent room. It enabled her to focus and complete the qualification. However, whilst many barriers had been tackled by the programme, childcare was still a major barrier to full time education or work, even though she was keen to go to college.

L was a teenage parent, living in a mother and baby unit. She had not achieved qualifications at school or college, and did not enjoy her time there. She had issues with self-confidence and felt people judged her.

She wanted to start college, and to obtain secure housing. But, she found having a young child made it difficult to study or work.

L liked the regulated learning as she gained a qualification whilst her child was being cared for and she met other young mothers which increased her self-confidence. L often met her adviser for non-regulated learning at home.

L had not progressed as she did not feel she was able to, until she received free childcare when her child was 24 months.

J had started a course at college but had not enjoyed it and had left. It was too far into the academic year for him to join an alternative course and he was not sure what path to take to re-enter EET. He was concerned about not being able to find something suitable.

J wanted to find a suitable apprenticeship, preferably in construction. He worked with his adviser to find opportunities that would suit him. He also worked with his adviser to search for and secure employment.

Through the programme, J progressed to employment and had sustained it. His aim is still to find an apprenticeship, but he feels that he has been given the information and support from his adviser to find the right one.

J had completed an apprenticeship in landscape gardening. He had hoped to secure employment after the apprenticeship, but there was no position available. J was not sure how to find alternative, suitable EET.

J wanted to find employment to earn his own money, but was struggling to find work. He also wanted to work on his personal skills, including resilience and reliability.

J obtained trial employment but was not offered a permanent job due to poor time-keeping. Working with his adviser, J was able to address this and was successful at securing a job.

C had started a course at college, but had not enjoyed it. He liked being at college but did not enjoy the subject area and how it was taught.

He was not sure what he wanted to do in the future, but knew that University was his ultimate education goal.

C worked with his adviser to help him identify what EET route he wanted to take. He considered apprenticeships in the field of business studies and appropriate college courses. With his adviser's support, he found a college course that suited his needs and secured a place.

He reported that his adviser really helped motivate and encourage him.

K was at risk of becoming NEET. He was attending specialist education provision but had been arrested and was currently on bail. K struggled to self-motivate and needed a lot of support to encourage him to engage in learning.

K was interested in becoming a barber and worked with his adviser to find appropriate opportunities. He also worked on developing his personal skills in relation to resilience, reliability and motivation.

K was successful in securing an apprenticeship, but it did not suit him. So, he applied for a different one. He enjoyed the new apprenticeship and was doing well. His confidence was improved, and he was looking forward to a positive future.

L has SEND that mainly affects social interaction. She had started an apprenticeship at a nursery, but had left because she did not get along with the other people doing the same apprenticeship scheme. Her confidence was affected so she did not feel she was ready to go into another apprenticeship.

Working with her adviser and completing the regulated learning in a group, which she struggled with at first, enabled her to develop social skills and increase her self-confidence.

As a result, she felt ready for an apprenticeship in a cake shop. She is successfully working towards completing her apprenticeship and enjoying it. She attributes having the confidence to undertake this apprenticeship to Connect 2.

J previously struggled with formal education and was asked to leave college due to an behavioural incident.

Whilst he struggled with formal education, he recognised the changes he needed to make, and signed up to Connect 2 as he felt it would help him.

J undertook some regulated learning, which he felt helped him develop his social skills and learning behaviours. He felt he benefitted, even though he did not complete a the courses.

Along with the non-regulated learning, J felt that Connect 2 helped prepare him better for college, and he was successfully sustaining his progression to an ICT course as a result.

M had a chaotic and complex life, with issues associated with his relationships and family, including incidents of violence. He was undergoing gender re-assignment and was dealing with anger issues, which he was prescribed medication to deal with. He did not consistently take his medication and this, along with his relationship issues, affected his ability to engage with the programme.

When he could focus without distractions, M was engaged and proactive in his attempts to secure EET. He successfully completed the regulated learning and secured a job. However, ongoing challenges in his personal life meant he was not able to sustain it. He is not currently focussed on EET, but his adviser has maintained some contact.

C had complex issues, including being in care, and had worked with 20 different agencies. She continued to feel frustrated and got angry in situations which upset her. She lacked confidence and focused on the negative.

C needed a lot of support to tackle her complex issues. She reported that her adviser was the first professional to really help her and make her feel positive. She continued to work with her adviser through a difficult personal situation and really benefitted from the 1:1 support.

C was working towards being ready for employment and completed voluntary work. She continued working with her adviser and secured a part-time job in a shop.

J had moderate SEND and issues with drug use. His home life was unstable, and he moved out due to a breakdown in the relationship with his family.

J had low self-confidence and issues with trusting employers to act with integrity. He struggled to sustain EET and reported that he found it difficult to concentrate on academic learning. He preferred to learn by doing and keeping busy.

Whilst on the programme, J left home and moved into temporary accommodation. He found working with his adviser during this time to be beneficial as it enabled him to stay positive about his future, but his engagement was sporadic. He has not progressed but continues to work with his adviser.

G was 17 and living semi-independently, having spent much of her life in care. She had disengaged from formal education in year 7 due to a bereavement and had struggled to re-engage due to a lack of appropriate provision and because she suffered from high levels of anxiety.

G was very anxious about meeting new people, but with the support of her adviser, she completed regulated learning and accessed 1:1 tuition in maths and English.

G was not sure what she wanted for her future, but she undertook a 4-week work trial through the programme, which led to her progression to an apprenticeship. She felt she would not have achieved that without Connect 2 support.

K moved to the area, but his request to join year 11 in a local school was refused. He was attending school part time where he lived previously as he had struggled with bullying.

He was keen to start college in September, but needed help to develop learning and social skills as well as determine the options available to him.

K completed regulated learning courses and participated in a Prince's Trust programme through Connect 2. With his adviser's support, he identified a course at college and applied. He has sustained his place.

He reported that both the regulated and non-regulated learning had helped prepare him, and that he enjoyed it.

SECTION 4 - CONCLUSIONS

11.0 Conclusions

Overall, the longitudinal research demonstrated that Connect 2 had a positive impact on the young people who were signed up to the programme. Over half of them progressed to EET from the programme, and positive outcomes were reported for other young people, even if they did not achieve progression.

The majority of young people had extremely complex needs and were NEET, or at risk of being NEET, due to significant and multiple barriers. Therefore, progressing over half of the young people was a positive outcome of the programme. This is especially true given the positive impact it was reported to have on softer outcomes for young people, beyond the group of the cohort who progressed.

The most effective element of the programme was reported to be the non-regulated learning. This was because advisers could use their expertise to identify a package of support, including CEIAG and wrap-around support to directly address the needs of each young person. The relationship that young people had with their adviser was integral to the success of this element. Advisers from the sub-contractors should be recognised for being a professional that young people could trust to help them develop. Many young people reported that they had not had a positive relationship with any other professionals. The non-regulated learning with their adviser was the first time that many young people felt someone had really listened to them, and actually helped them with their future.

The area which could have been improved was regulated learning. For some young people it was not relevant and / or the group work was a barrier to them because they did not feel able to work effectively with their peers. There were a number of young people who did benefit from the regulated learning, so it's inclusion in the programme was positive. However, making it something that the majority of young people were expected to complete was not beneficial.

The ultimate aim of the programme was progression, and therefore achievement and sustainment was a positive outcome. Overall, young people were happy with their progression, in particular those who had moved into education or training. Those in employment reported being less satisfied if it was not of high quality. On moving into a progression destination, most young people required ongoing support to help them sustain the progression, particularly if they were still dealing with issues in their lives. Without the continued support of their adviser, they were less likely to sustain progression. Beyond the young people who were recorded as having sustained progression, there were others who progressed after the required 28-day period, or moved to a more suitable destination from the one they progressed to. These were not valid within the programme, but were successes for the young people involved and should also be recognised, even if not recorded.

12.0 Recommendations

On the basis of this longitudinal research, some key recommendations are made. These are designed to inform any future programmes which have similar aims to the Connect 2 programme. They should make future projects or programmes even more effective.

i) Complex Needs

Young people who benefit from more intensive CEIAG, and wrap around support, often have very complex needs. Most young people who were involved in the longitudinal study had multiple barriers that were a combination of situations, educational and personal barriers. A review of the sample suggests that they were representative of young people across the programme. With complex needs it is very difficult to take young people from their starting point

into EET in a linear way. The process is generally iterative and there need to be multiple facets of support. Due to their situations, young people may disengage and then re-engage with the programme, and will need intensive support to get them into a progression destination and to successfully sustain it. When designing future programmes, these very complex needs should be taken into account.

ii) Flexibility

To meet the complex and varied needs of the young people, and the different rates at which they are able to address barriers, the programme needs to be flexible. This allows advisers to use their expertise to take the best approach to working with a particular young person to have maximum benefit. This includes the flexibility to offer suitable non-regulated learning for the amount of time and across the period of time that suits the young person. There also needs to be flexibility in the delivery of regulated learning so that it can be made suitable for a greater number of young people. Appropriate levels of flexibility should be incorporated into future programmes.

iii) Prioritise Non-Regulated Style Interventions

Non-regulated learning was reported to be the element of the programme which had the biggest impact for the greatest number of young people. It enabled sub-contractors to add to their existing provision and spend more time with young people, offering them extended and wrap around support in addition to their standard CEIAG offer. The non-regulated learning was the part that encouraged young people to engage, and was how they tackled their barriers to EET. Non-regulated learning, or equivalent, should be an integral part of future programmes.

iv) Support Engagement of Young People

The number and severity of barriers that young people had to overcome was not the biggest determiner in successful progression. Whilst it had a significant impact, it was young people's willingness to engage that made the greatest difference. When young people were engaged, and felt that the programme could have a positive impact on their lives, they were able to work with their adviser to tackle barriers. Those who were not engaged, or did not stay consistently engaged, found it more difficult to benefit from the programme and progress. In future programmes, finding ways to ensure young people are engaged, and stay engaged, should be incorporated.

v) Regulated Learning Should be an Option

Some young people on the Connect 2 programme really benefitted from the regulated learning, however for a large number it was not relevant. Young people who will not benefit from regulated learning should not have to complete this element of a programme to be successful. The way in which regulated learning is delivered should be explored to ensure that it is effective and suits young people, and it should always be supported by non-regulated learning. In future programmes, regulated learning should be offered as an option where it is beneficial. Ways in which this can be practically achieved should be explored.

vi) The Right Progressions

Whilst many young people were happy with their progression destination, not all young people went somewhere that matched their aspirations. There was also a preference given to employment over education and training in terms of payments made to sub-contractors within the programme. If education and training are felt to offer young people better long-term prospects, these should be prioritised. Some requirements could potentially be lifted, such as the progression within 28 days and the ability for a young person to leave one progression destination and start at another. This would allow for greater flexibility, for young people to find a destination that really suits them. Future programmes should incorporate the appropriate mechanisms for young people find the right progression and make it more likely that it is sustained.

vii) Measure Softer Outcomes

In addition to progressions, advisers and young people reported many softer outcomes of the programme that were very important to them. This included increased independence, improved management of emotions, resolution of difficult situations in their lives, improved self-esteem and self-confidence and developed employability skills.

However, if they did not progress and sustain their progression, they were not recorded as having been successful on the programme. Future programmes should take account of these important softer outcomes, and include a mechanism for measuring them.

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