

Digital Exclusion Profiling of Vulnerable Groups Young People not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET): *A profile*



Executive Summary

It is a common assumption that all young people can 'do' technology having grown up with a dizzying evolution of devices at both home and school. This expected knowledge, that is commonplace for interaction within society and for all natures of vocation, may not however be inherent in those that fall the wrong side of the 'digital divide'.

Those Young People not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) are a key example of how individuals who fail to settle in educational institutions, or have psychological or familial issues, may become part of this Vulnerable Group and will find themselves at a distinct disadvantage for self-development. Particularly in the key late teen years, a vicious circle can be unwillingly embarked upon that ultimately leads to social exclusion.

There is much research showing the subsequent issues and societal cost of those individuals who find themselves on this track. The number of initiatives trying to tackle this shows the wide recognition of this phenomenon and the ease with which this group can be identified. Prevention at the key 16-18 age group is paramount and ICT may offer some solutions as to how these Young People may be engaged effectively.

The Profiling Report

Aim

The Report, published in October 2008, provides a study of the characteristics of this Vulnerable Group and provides insight into its current use of technology and how this might be harnessed to tackle the social problems that it faces.

This Group has been the focus of numerous local and national initiatives, which rather than having the desired effect of individual engagement, has in fact given rise to "short-term fatigue" given the lack of continuity between the projects. The Report encourages consideration of how ICT could be used to coordinate and further promote these initiatives effectively.

Methodology

The research methodology for this report consisted of secondary research undertaken to understand the life circumstances of the Group and overlaying this with primary research through focus groups made up of members and the organisations that support them. The Report focuses on the 9% of the 16-18 year olds in England who were identified as being 'inactive' during this key period of development and defines this as "NEETs".

Highlights of Findings

Barriers

- Members of this group often have unstable housing situations with no permanent address, leading to a nomadic lifestyle making accessing support services problematic
- Overcoming negative attitudes to mainstream education can require counselling on an individual basis and with more consideration of the personal situation
- A lack of family guidance and role models may contribute to a general apathy towards self-development and to an individual becoming caught on a downward spiral

ICT

- ICT is widely used by the Group but is generally viewed as a means of social contact as opposed to a medium through which information can be gathered
- For this Group, the cost of ICT devices or services remains a key barrier to increased adoption
- The members of this Group still require 'real' guidance at this stage in their life and ICT without human intervention is not productive in assisting them

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The full Report provides detailed findings from the working groups on how technology is being utilised and the current barriers to increasing use. It also details the wide range of support that is available, access to which is the underlying consideration of this study. The Report uses a number of Case Studies to highlight projects that are delivering success in this field.

The full document is available on
www.esd-toolkit.org.uk



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