KICKBOXING, KINDNESS & GOING THE EXTRA MILE

GOOD PRACTICE FOR WORKING WITH NEETS UNDER SICAP

FULL REPORT
OCTOBER 2017
### Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BTWEA</td>
<td>Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDP</td>
<td>Community Development Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRM</td>
<td>Customer Relationship Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Central Statistics Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>CV</td>
<td>Curriculum Vitae</td>
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<tr>
<td>CYPSC</td>
<td>Children and Young People’s Services Committees</td>
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<tr>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Department of Education and Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHPCLG</td>
<td>Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>DJE</td>
<td>Department of Justice and Equality</td>
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<tr>
<td>DJEI</td>
<td>Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation</td>
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<tr>
<td>DRCD</td>
<td>Department of Rural and Community Development</td>
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<td>DSP</td>
<td>Department of Social Protection</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECDL</td>
<td>European Computer Driving Licence</td>
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<td>ESF</td>
<td>European Social Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>ETB</td>
<td>Education and Training Board</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>EURES</td>
<td>European Employment Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>FÁS</td>
<td>National Training and Employment Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>HACCP</td>
<td>Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEA</td>
<td>Higher Education Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HP Deprivation Index</td>
<td>The HP Deprivation Index provides a relative affluence or disadvantage score by census year for small area, electoral division, SICAP Lot and local authority level.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>Human Resource</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSE</td>
<td>Health Service Executive</td>
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<tr>
<td>IHREC</td>
<td>Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRIS</td>
<td>Integrated Reporting and Information System</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISCED</td>
<td>International Standard Classification of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCDC</td>
<td>Local Community Development Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>LCDP</td>
<td>Local and Community Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEET</td>
<td>Not in Employment, Education or Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships</td>
<td>Local community development organisations - these community and voluntary organisations provide SICAP services, also see PI.</td>
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<tr>
<td>PEIL</td>
<td>Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>PI</td>
<td>Programme Implementer - another term for the organisations providing SICAP services. Also see partnerships.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SICAP</td>
<td>Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOLAS</td>
<td>Further Education and Training Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>YEI</td>
<td>Youth Employment Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>YMCA</td>
<td>Young Men’s Christian Association</td>
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</table>
Acknowledgements

The research presented in this report required a substantial dedication and commitment from many people and organisations. On behalf of Pobal and the study steering group, we would like to extend our sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to the report and its recommendations, through their participation.

First of all, we are thankful to the Department of Rural and Community Development and the European Social Fund in Ireland for jointly funding the study. The Department of Rural and Community Development is the national funder of SICAP and oversees a very significant public investment in the programme. Under the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL 2014 – 2020), the European Social Fund matched Irish Government funding in SICAP for young people aged 15-24. In particular, a special allocation was available under the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) to those young SICAP participants who were not in employment, education or training (NEET).

We are very grateful to the team at Quality Matters, who carried out the research and authored the report, for the depth of professional expertise and attention to detail they brought to this work. Their knowledge and understanding of the sector and the young people who are at the centre of this research was essential in producing the high quality findings and recommendations included in the report.

On behalf of the research team, we would like to express our sincere thanks to all SICAP programme implementers and to other stakeholder organisations working with SICAP to support disadvantaged young people for sharing their time, expertise and experience so generously. Particular thanks go to the case study sites who accommodated the researchers for a day in their service. We would also like to thank the young people who took part in the interviews, providing important insights about their experience of the programme.

As the commissioners of the research, Pobal would like to express its gratitude to the research steering group for guiding the study’s progress to completion.

We hope that the results of this work reflect the time and efforts of all those involved and will be widely used to support young people in their journey.

Steering Group Members (in alphabetical order):

> Hugh Geoghegan, ESF Managing Authority
> Ela Hogan, Pobal
> Massimiliano Mascherini, Eurofound
> Ruth Pritchard, Pobal
> Lucy Pyne, Pobal
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8.2 Engaging young people
8.3 Working with young people
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Appendix 3: Interview schedules and relationship to literature review
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1 Introduction

This research aimed to identify current good practice in Ireland in relation to the engagement and service delivery to young people Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETs).

Supports for NEETs are provided as part of the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP). SICAP is funded by the Irish Government and co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF), including a special allocation under the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI). The research was commissioned by Pobal, who manages SICAP on behalf of the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD). NEETs have been recognised as one of the most difficult to engage target groups under SICAP, prompting an interest in identifying good practice for working with NEETs. A significant interest in good practice related to providing services and supports to NEETs also exists at the European level. Eurofound (2016) has called for more research on supports for NEETs, including the documentation of qualitative approaches to develop a better understanding of what works in practice.

The SICAP programme demonstrates Ireland’s strength in engaging disadvantaged young people, including NEETs, and at the same time, offers an insight into 50 area-based, local approaches to implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative. This national study presents a unique opportunity for the work with NEETs carried out under SICAP to inform practice in other European countries. Drawing on this experience, this research aims to provide both Irish and EU audiences with well evidenced and synthesised data on ‘what works’.

The report starts with a brief outline of the research methodology. Next, the literature review chapter provides a context for the SICAP programme and outlines research on engagement and service provision to young people not in education and employment in Ireland and internationally. The next chapter provides an overview of the range of supports young people received through SICAP and their outcomes in relation to engagement in education and progression into employment. Chapters 5 to 7 provide a detailed thematic analysis of the findings arising from interviews with young people, service providers and partner organisations. These chapters also include a number of ‘spotlights’- small descriptive vignettes outlining specific innovative practices or projects. Chapter 8 identifies 19 good practice recommendations arising from the research.

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1 See the European Social Fund Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020 and summary of measures included at Appendix 3. The national definition of NEETs agreed for implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative is included at Appendix 4.
2 Methodology

2.1 Overview and approach

The research aimed to identify stakeholder views on what constitutes good practice in relation to service delivery to NEETs. This section of the report highlights the steps undertaken in the research to arrive at a number of good practice recommendations, as well as the limitations to the methodology.

2.2 Interviews

2.2.1 Interviews with PI managers / senior staff members

Interviews were undertaken with 40 PIs to gather information on the processes, procedures and practices being used across SICAP service providers nationally. Interviews were undertaken by phone, taking between 45 to 60 minutes each. The aim of these interviews was to identify what was considered good practice in relation to engaging, retaining and supporting progress among NEETs. Interviews were semi-structured and were partially transcribed with key quotes being read back to and confirmed with interviewees to increase accuracy and validity.

2.2.2 Interviews with young people supported under SICAP

Interviews were undertaken with 42 young people in order to identify what service recipients considered to be good practice. Young people attending the services identified for the case studies were randomly sampled. The interviewees were randomly selected only from those young people, who had previously provided consent to be contacted for research purposes. Young people were invited to participate by phone and text. If they did not respond after two attempts to contact them, they were removed from the contact list. On average, six young people needed to be contacted for every one young person who did respond. In part, this was due to the fact that many phone numbers for young people did not work (approximately five out of every ten numbers). Also, many young people did not respond to the invite.

Participation in the process was voluntary and all young people who took part in an interview received a small voucher in recognition of potential expenses they may have incurred. Interviewers asked questions to gain an understanding of participant’s perspective on the following:

- How they were engaged in the programme;
- Why they engaged with it;
- What was effective and useful for them about the programme;
- Whether they progressed, and what factors they felt impacted on that;
- Whether and how they felt they could influence the programme content or delivery;
- Whether and how the programme supported them to identify goals and plans;
- What was unique, good or useful about programme content or delivery that they felt would be effective for other young people.

2.2.3 Interviews with partner organisations

To understand the value of SICAP’s work with NEETs from the perspective of other services, PIs engaged in case studies were asked to identify a number of partner organisations who could comment on their work. Providers’ information was passed to researchers who undertook semi-structured interviews with partner organisations. Interviews aimed to establish:
- Understanding of how SICAP NEET work complements other service provision;
- Effectiveness of partnerships and good practice in relation to this;
- Potential for improving interagency working in relation to NEETs.

In total, 13 partner organisation staff were interviewed, with each interview lasting, on average, 25 minutes.

### 2.3 Case studies

Case studies were undertaken in six sites, and five were included in the final report, based on guidance from research commissioners. The aim of the case studies was to explore service provision in greater depth and identify further examples of good practice. In each study site, researchers met with senior management and carried out a focus group with staff. The questions asked in this process followed the structure of other PI interviews. The case studies and details on how they were selected are included in the Appendix.

**Table 1: List of services chosen for case study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic area</th>
<th>Name of service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leinster</td>
<td>Wexford Local Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laois Community and Enterprise Development Company Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munster</td>
<td>Waterford Area Partnership Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South Tipperary Development Company Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connaught / Ulster</td>
<td>Donegal Local Development Company Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Comhar Chathair Chorcai Teoranta (Cork City Partnership Ltd.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.4 Analysis

#### 2.4.1 Thematic analysis

To organise and process the information gathered through interviews and case studies, a broad based qualitative analysis was undertaken. This involved coding themes from interview and focus group transcripts. The researchers identified an initial set of 45 themes, these were further analysed for coherency and accuracy and consolidated into 19 themes.

#### 2.4.2 Data analysis

The research methodology also involved a predictive statistical analysis using data on NEETs recorded in the IRIS system. The objective of this analysis was to test how the following three factors affected outcomes for young people:

- demographic factors (i.e. age, gender),
- process factors (i.e. number and type of interventions), and
- quality indicators (i.e. completion of needs analysis and relationships with partners).

A logistic regression model and odds ratios analysis, both produced statistically significant factors that predicted the odds of successful participant progression in employment and engagement in education. While this analysis produced some interesting results, a level of bias was detected within the data when looking at certain PIs. A test for independence of some factors revealed that some
Pls were different than the rest, most likely due to different practices employed for data entry. This meant that the underlying dataset used was not sufficiently robust to publish this analysis. However, the learning from this process will be useful in informing future analysis and guiding how data collection can be improved.

2.5 Management of ethical concerns

A number of ethical concerns, outlined in Table 2 below, were identified and strategies to manage these were clarified with project commissioners as a key part of the planning stage.

*Table 2: Ethical concerns and management*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>Detail</th>
<th>Preventative mechanism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perception of compulsion to participate</td>
<td>The potential for young people to participate out of fear of negative impacts on the service they receive or the service provider. This perception could also lead to inauthentic data.</td>
<td>Young people were informed in text and in all phone calls, of the voluntary and anonymous nature of the research, and that there would be no negative consequences arising from their participation or refusal to participate. Young people were advised that they did not have to take part, that they did not have to answer any question, and that they could end the interview at any point.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people could be negatively affected by the interviews and issues discussed</td>
<td>The possibility that young people may leave the interview distressed on account of a topic discussed within the interview.</td>
<td>Questions were reviewed to ensure these were respectful and orientated to the young person’s experience. Prior to questions related to mental health and well-being, interviewees were reminded that they did not have to answer. Protocols were developed to respond to young people becoming upset. This situation did not occur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of clients on IRIS</td>
<td>The potential for data provided to the researchers to include identifiable information.</td>
<td>Identifying information, such as name and address were removed from the database, and a unique identifier given to all cases prior to being provided to the research team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of research participants in the report</td>
<td>The possibility that young people, Pls or partners organisations would be identifiable in the research report when they have been promised anonymity.</td>
<td>All quotes were anonymised and no identifying data was included in the written report. In some cases small details in the quotes were changed to protect anonymity without changing the meaning of the quotation. In other cases the interview number is omitted to protect confidentiality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That young people would incur expenses in relation to engagement</td>
<td>The possibility that young people who took part would incur expenses resulting in participation being a financial burden.</td>
<td>All young people were offered a €20 one-for-all voucher for participating to cover any costs incurred as a result of taking part. This was mailed to them following the interview.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.6 Limitations of the research

2.6.1 Introduction

All research has limitations which are factors that are outside the control of the research team. These factors influence how findings of the research can be interpreted and then generalised to other situations. It is important to understand these limitations, so the research findings can be appropriately discussed.

2.6.2 Lack of appropriate comparator for demographic profile of SICAP NEETs

In the absence of equivalent datasets and given the specificity of the national eligibility conditions for NEETs co-financed under the ESF PEIL 2014-2020, it was not possible to make full comparisons between NEETs in SICAP and the whole population of NEETs in Ireland. Instead, demographic data for the research cohort was compared with data on young people aged 15-24 in the whole population of Ireland, as collected through the census.

2.6.3 Responder biases and methods to mitigate these limitations

- **Self-selection bias:** Research participants may be systematically different (i.e. sex, socio-economic status) from those who refuse to participate. This raises questions about generalisability (Heckman, 1990; James, 2006). In other words, the observed differences in the NEET group may be the result of self-selection rather than the characteristics of larger population (Melton et al., 2013). What this means in practice is that the research may have unintentionally engaged young people who had better experiences of the service, as those who had more negative experiences may have ‘self-selected’ out of the process.

- **Memory bias:** interviews were self-report and, as with all qualitative research, were subject to the interviewee over-reporting, under-reporting or having memory distortions (Graham and Naglieri, 2003). Triangulation of data from different sources is used to reduce this limitation.

- **Social desirability bias:** Interviewees can be motivated to give ‘polite’ or socially desirable answers rather than a more truthful answer. Such biases may be more pronounced amongst those stigmatised groups, such as NEETs. This bias can lead to under-reporting on sensitive topics as a way to protect their privacy (Heckathorn, 1997) or a misrepresentation of socially undesirable behaviours and traits (Krumpal, 2013). The methods to limit this bias included: providing interviewers with skills to ensure no judgement was expressed through tone or comment and scripted introduction comments to put interviewees at ease.
3 Literature review

3.1 Introduction
This literature review provides a summary of key issues in relation to youth not in employment, education or training (NEET). The need for accessible, effective and efficient supports is outlined. The review also highlights interventions and practice that have provided promising results in the effective recruitment, engagement and progression of NEETs within the OECD countries, the EU and Ireland.

3.2 Search process
This review focused on the most recent peer-reviewed journal articles discussing NEETs in Ireland, the EU and OECD member countries as well as programmatic reviews addressing the needs of this cohort. Other information including international, EU and Irish government reports and statistical data sources relating to this cohort were also used.

3.3 An overview of NEETs

3.3.1 Origin of the concept of NEETs
Young people who are not in employment, education or training have been conceptualised and referred to as NEETs since the 1990s. The NEET indicator was designed to measure young people (aged 15-24 or aged 15-29 in some countries) who, for a variety of reasons, were not “accumulating human capital through formal channels such as participation in the labour market or in education” (Eurofound, 2016).

As a category, NEETs are considered a powerful “tool to inform youth-oriented policies” and through which specific vulnerabilities of young people categorised as NEET can be better understood (Eurofound, 2016). The concept has been broadly utilised to measure societal disadvantage of youth as the term encapsulates sub-groups at risk of being marginalised in policy debates, such as young mothers or disabled youth. Generally, the NEET concept is used to better understand not only youth unemployment but also youth engagement in increasing their human capital.

The use of NEET as a term and/or category has been criticised for being too heterogeneous or, in some instances, for being used to stigmatise (Maguire, 2015). Eurofound and other researchers have highlighted the need to counter these criticisms by effectively disaggregating youth categorised as NEETs to understand their distinct characteristics and needs, including accounting for national conditions and profiles (Cuzzocrea, 2014; Sissons & Jones 2012; Furlong, 2006).

Failing to capture the divergent needs and characteristics of the various groups who are considered ‘NEET’ could lead to potential missteps in effective formulation and targeting of solutions to address sub-groups within NEETs, such as difficult family backgrounds or young mothers (Eurofound, 2016). Disaggregating the NEET population to understand its distinct subgroups, their characteristics and potentially different needs for welfare, training and activation is important to ensure effective interventions by programmes, such as SICAP (Eurofound, 2012; Eurofound 2016; Cuzzocrea, 2014).

3.3.2 Definition of NEETs
Since the idea of NEET was conceived, various definitions have emerged which vary in regard to characteristics of NEETs. In broad terms, the definition of a NEET within the EU and Ireland is an
individual not in employment, education or training who is between 15 and 24 years of age\textsuperscript{2}. More specifically, Ireland’s national definition of NEET, as it relates to eligibility for participation in the Youth Employment Initiative, may be considered broadly inclusive since it allows for a participant to have some earned income.\textsuperscript{3} As discussed further in the section below, NEETs and their environment vary and should be carefully considered by policy makers and programme implementers when adopting practice from other EU countries.

3.3.3 Youth unemployment versus NEETs

While youth unemployment and NEETs are related, there are important differences between these two terms. The youth unemployment rate is a measure of out of work youth who have looked for work in the past month and are able to start within two weeks. The rate is derived by considering this group as a proportion of economically active youth, which typically include individuals currently in education or who have withdrawn from seeking work \textsuperscript{4} (Eurofound, 2012; Sissons & Jones, 2012).

In comparison, NEETs, by definition are youth not in employment, education or training, but the NEET rate includes some economically inactive youth, such as those taking a planned study or work break. The NEET rate is derived by considering this group in proportion to the total rate of youth (Eurofound, 2012; Sissons & Jones, 2012).

The NEETs rate can vary from the youth unemployment rate. This is generally due to differences in the denominator utilised in the calculation as shown below (Figure 1). Another factor contributing to a lack of clarity on these terms is how attendance in education is recorded and its relationship to a young person being considered available for work, particularly for younger NEETs (15-19), who are likely to be engaged in full time education (Eurofound, 2012; Sissons & Jones, 2012).

![Figure 1: Youth unemployment rate and NEET rate differences (Eurofound, 2012)](image)

3.4 Consequences of being NEET

The costs of being NEET are both economic and personal in nature. Understanding the impacts borne by individuals and societies is a complex exercise, given the wide ranging and indirect and direct nature of these impacts. Key impacts are discussed below:

\textsuperscript{2} While the OECD utilises 15-29 years of age for many metrics regarding NEETs, SICAP aligns with Eurofound and EU defining NEETs as 15-24 year olds for statistical data. As noted earlier, the ESF has further standardised eligibility for the Youth Employment Initiative in Ireland and SICAP follows these eligibility parameters in recording NEET participants. Various other organisations have differing NEET definitions including ILO, Eurostat and SDSN (see (Elder, 2015)).

\textsuperscript{3} This definition is given at Appendix 4.

\textsuperscript{4} The International Labour Organisation definition of the unemployment rate is the most widely used labour market indicator because of its international comparability and relative timely availability. It can be inflated as those who have withdrawn from the labour market are often included in the calculation.
3.4.1 Individual consequences

Research has noted that there are significant personal impacts to being NEET, which gain importance the longer an individual remains NEET. These include:

- **Wage scarring and penalties** – there is extensive research demonstrating that unemployment, particularly for young people, has significant long-term effect on life-time earning potential (Mawn et al, 2017; Carcillo, 2015; Eurofound, 2012; Sissons & Jones, 2012; Gregga & Tominey, 2005).

- **Reduced employability** – by being outside of education, training or employment, youth are less likely to develop ‘soft skills’, such as resilience, time management, communication, and motivation skills that make them more likely to gain and maintain employment. Research and employer surveys have highlighted this as a growing issue (Brunello & Schlotter, 2011; Acevo, 2012).

- **Increased risk behaviour** – NEETs facing exclusion are at risk of increased substance misuse, early or lone parenthood, and offending (Eurofound, 2012; McGinnity et al., 2014; Scott, J et al., 2013). Youth offending has been highly correlated to disengagement from school and employment, which creates a cycle of social exclusion (Coles et al., 2002).

- **Poorer well-being** – NEET status is correlated with poorer general health, emotional strain, low self-esteem and confidence. As physical and emotional wellbeing are critical for engaging in employment and education, their lack can have significant impacts on families, deepen exclusion, deprivation and limit capacity to progress (Bell & Blanchflower, 2011; Mendolia & Walker, 2014).

A 2010 study of unemployed youth in Ireland found each of the above impacts to be relevant to young job seekers in Ireland. Of the 90 interviewees, 90% agreed that unemployment negatively impacted their sense of wellbeing. The study also found that the toughest factor in the job search was keeping a “positive front” while experiencing personal turmoil (O’Connor, 2010).

3.4.2 Societal consequences

Beyond the individual costs, NEETs have a significant impact on society in areas of public finances, economic productivity and civic engagement:

- **Public expenditure** – taking the form of additional welfare payments, increased healthcare costs and lost revenue from taxes, NEETs have a significant economic impact on society. In the UK, the estimated cost of NEETs aged 16-18 to public finances is between £12bn and £32bn (Coles et al., 2010). The OECD estimates foregone public earnings to be about 1% of Ireland’s GDP (2016).

- **Disengaged citizens** - Eurofound highlighted that there are far reaching societal costs of young people’s lost trust in public institutions, naming lack of political engagement and decreased social participation as significant challenges (2012, 2015, and 2016). While this is challenging to measure, the frequency of this being referenced in research and active tracking by EU and OECD, point to the level of concern regarding these issues (OECD, 2016).

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5 Research participants were aged between 18-25 and had engaged with (the now reconstituted) FÁS and/or the nationwide network of local Social Welfare Offices for a minimum of 3 months. Participants were all likely to be NEET, however, it is important to note that based on research parameters all would have completed their leaving certificates or had vocational qualifications.
3.5 Characteristics of NEETs

Overall, unemployed or inactive youth vary greatly in background, personal characteristics and the barriers they face to education and/or work. Characteristics that NEETs have broadly in common are difficulties in the transition from school to work (Kern, 2013) and that being NEET is not necessarily a temporary state and may have longer term implications for future employment and earnings. The ‘scarring effects’ of being NEET are also increased by the length of time a young person is unemployed (Carcillo, 2015)6.

Research from the OECD and EU countries has pointed to the value of disaggregating NEETs into various subcategories, with a goal of describing homogeneity and reducing stigma. One such approach was proposed by Eurofound in 2012 and later refined in 2016:

- **Re-entrants:** young people who will soon re-enter employment, education or training and will soon begin or resume accumulation of “human capital through formal channels” as they have already been hired or enrolled in education or training.
- **Short-term unemployed:** young people who are unemployed, seeking work and available to start within two weeks, who have been unemployed for less than a year. This group was disaggregated given that short periods of unemployment can be considered normal and their level of vulnerability can be expected to be moderate.
- **Long-term unemployed:** young people who are unemployed, seeking work and available to start within two weeks, and have been unemployed for more than a year. This category recognises that youth are at high risk of disengagement and social exclusion as longer-term unemployment can damage employability, human capital and future outcomes.
- **Unavailable due to illness or disability:** young people who are not seeking employment or cannot work within two weeks due to illness or disability.
- **Unavailable due to family responsibilities:** young people who are not seeking work or are not available to work because they are caring for children or have other family responsibilities. This category is a mix of the vulnerable and non-vulnerable, given the variety of potential issues, such as lack of affordable childcare or in-home care.
- **Discouraged workers:** young people who have stopped looking for work because they believe that opportunities are not available. These are often vulnerable individuals at risk of social exclusion, and are likely to have experienced poorer outcomes.
- **Other inactive:** This group is likely to be more heterogeneous spanning a spectrum of vulnerability: the most vulnerable, the hard-to-reach or at risk of being deeply alienated, the most privileged, and those who are ‘holding out’ for a specific prospect or who are constructively engaged in alternative paths e.g., arts, music or self-directed learning.

The key message for policy makers was the need to clearly understand the composition of the NEETs within Ireland to ensure appropriately targeted interventions. The OECD has identified the following key “watch points” that echo and build on Eurofound’s findings (OECD, 2016):

- Programmes should be calibrated to the barriers faced (marginalisation and vulnerability).
- Lower skills in youth increase NEETs vulnerability.
- Young women are often NEET due to care-giving responsibilities for children.
- NEETs tend to have a lower level of happiness, trust and political interest.

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6 Potential drivers of ‘scarring effects’ can be the depreciation of human capital/skills, losing professional networks during unemployment, or impacts to self-esteem/behavior. Also, potential employers often view long periods of unemployment negatively.
• Safety nets tend to be weaker for young people.
• Fighting early school leaving is critical.
• Quality vocational training can assist transition from school to work.

3.6 The current labour market environment of NEETs
The Great Recession, systemic changes caused by globalisation, deindustrialisation, the exponential growth of technology mean that unemployed youth face a wholly different labour market than previous generations (Sissons & Jones, 2012; Powers et al., 2015). As such, transition into adulthood is more “complex and protracted” resulting in more “diversified and individualised trajectories” than in the past (Eurofound, 2012). This is significant for understanding and addressing of barriers to youth participation in employment, education and training, which are not being effectively understood by traditional indicators, such as employment, unemployment and inactivity (Eurofound, 2014).

3.7 NEETs and youth unemployment - Ireland and other environs
In 2015, 15% of youth in the OECD were considered NEET, which equated to approximately 40 million people with two-thirds of them not actively seeking work (OECD, 2016). From 2007 to 2012, Ireland experienced the strongest drop in labour force participation among youth (11%) ahead of Spain (10%) and Denmark (8%) and well above the average 2% of other OECD countries. Ireland was also amongst the countries with the highest rise in NEET rates alongside Greece and Spain at 10% (Carcillo, 2015). When considering only EU15 countries7, Ireland, in 2015, had the fifth highest rate of youth unemployment at 19.7% - only Italy, Greece, Spain and Cyprus had higher rates. While Ireland’s NEET rate declined at a faster rate than the EU15 average, as of 2015, it was still 116% of the EU15 average, see Figure 2 (Farrell, 2016).

During the same period, reductions in overall employment rates were equally strong with a high decline in Ireland (19%), just below Spain (22%) but above Greece (15%), which was reflected in rising unemployment ratios. Of young people, the most severely impacted individuals were those with low educational qualifications. It is crucial to note that in Ireland, Greece and Spain, the number of jobs available to highly educated youth also fell at the time of the highest decline in youth employment (Carcillo, 2015). Ireland continues to have a somewhat higher NEET rate, as well as a higher share of long-term unemployed and discouraged workers, than the EU average. This indicates that structural barriers to young people’s entry into the labour market persist (Eurofound, 2016). The rate of youth unemployment in Ireland has roughly mirrored the EU recently. According to Eurostat, as of February 2016, the youth unemployment rate was 19.4% in the EU and in Ireland, according to CSO, was 18% in the second quarter of 2016 (CSO, 2016). However, economic improvement has not been “spread equally across the country” and that progressing young people into employment continued to be a significant challenge (Pobal, 2016).

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7 EU15 consists of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.
The most recent report from the OECD (2016), notes that Ireland’s NEET rate has not fully recovered from the Great Recession, and Ireland continues to have a high proportion of ‘inactive’8 NEETs (Figures 2 and 3). One-third of Irish NEETs are early school leavers.

Across the OECD, earnings have grown more slowly for the 2009 cohort of labour market entrants in nearly all countries studied, with Irish youth being the worst affected. More recent labour market entrants in Ireland experienced a 26% drop in earnings after their first four years, compared to a 16% growth in earnings for those who entered the labour market before the crisis (OECD, 2016). This evidences the fact that earning potential has significantly decreased for younger people.

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8 Inactive NEETs in OECD literature combine Eurofound’s categories. These are inclusive of “NEETs who are not actively seeking work for a variety of reasons, e.g. care obligations, health problems, substance abuse problems as well as the belief that any job search would be unsuccessful” p. 19 (OECD, 2016).
3.7.1 Emigration from Ireland

Emigration has likely impacted on the Irish NEET population, however most research has focused on immigration not emigration. A 2013 report found that over 70% of emigrants are aged between 20 and 29 when they depart. Underemployment was considered a driving factor of emigration and having greatest impact on rural Ireland. It also suggested that graduates were over represented in the emigre population, (Glynn et al., 2013). The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) conducted research in 2013 sampling over 1000 Irish residents about emigration. The research found 50% of those aged 18-24 had an intention to emigrate primarily due to a lack of employment opportunities or having better opportunities abroad (Glynn et al., 2013). Other research has mirrored these findings (McAleer, 2013).

3.7.2 Irish NEETs and education

Those with low education levels fare particularly poorly in Ireland. Figure 4 demonstrates that, as of 2014, Ireland’s NEETs were primarily made up of those who had not completed either post-secondary or lower secondary education (Eurofound, 2016). The OECD found that in Ireland 65% of youth who dropped out of school before completing upper secondary school are NEET compared to just 13% of those with a third level degree. These early school leavers account for one-third of all Irish NEETs (OECD, 2016).

95% of Ireland’s NEETs supported by SICAP have no tertiary education. This rate is higher when compared with OECD share of 85% (Carcillo, 2015). Figure 4 lists the levels of education attainment of NEETs aged 15-24, based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011) as follows:

- ISCED 0-2: early childhood to lower secondary
- ISCED 3-4: upper secondary to post-secondary non-tertiary
- ISCED 5-8: short cycle tertiary to Doctoral or equivalent

Ireland ranks 18th of 29 EU countries in relation to the number of young people who complete lower secondary school.

![Figure 4: Educational attainment of NEETs aged 15-24 in EU28 (Eurofound, 2016)](image-url)
3.7.3 ‘Inactive’ Irish NEETs

“Inactive” NEETs account for about 3% of the young population – the “inactive” NEET rate for those aged under 18 is less than 1%, and 4% for those aged 18-24. Breaking the NEET groups down into those looking for work (unemployed) and those not looking for work (inactive), it can be observed that the sharp rise in the NEET rate in Ireland was driven by a rise in youth unemployment. The youth unemployment rate remains double that of the over 25-year-olds (OECD, 2016).

3.7.4 Irish NEETs and disability

Eurofound (2012) found that those with a disability or health issue are 40% more likely to be NEET than those in good health. Additional research found that at the individual level disability is a strong predictor of NEET status, especially among males (OECD, 2016). The Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan for Ireland (Irish Government, 2013) noted that of those identified as ‘inactive’ NEETs (3% of the total youth population at the time) 20% describe themselves as disabled. In 2014, Ireland had the highest rate of unemployment and disability benefit recipients among OECD youth. Ireland’s rate of youth disability benefit recipients was approximately 5% - well above the OECD average of 2% and was the highest of the OECD countries\(^9\). The report observed that this was particularly worrying, given the likelihood of people remaining on these benefits in the longer term.

3.7.5 Irish NEETs and mental health

While there has been little research examining the rates of mental disorders amongst NEETs, Irish research in 2015 highlighted the severity and bidirectional nature of mental disorders amongst Irish NEETs. The study found that, independent of prior mental disorders, the risk in suicidal ideation was seven times higher amongst NEETs compared to non-NEETs. Importantly, there was no significant difference when adjusted for social class or gender. Other significant findings for Irish NEETs when compared to non-NEETs are that they:

- Were four times more likely to be diagnosed with a mental disorder in childhood or early adolescence.
- Had a threefold increased risk of any mental health disorder and/or increased odds of suicide attempts over their lifetime.
- Had a twofold increased risk of anxiety disorder.

Researchers concluded that their findings provided “compelling economic and societal arguments for early intervention and treatment” as well as highlighted the “importance of vocational interventions for reducing suicide risk in young adults” (Powers et al., 2015, p. 155). Other research supports the finding that childhood psychological ill health is more detrimental to long term employment than poor childhood physical health (Goodman & Smith, 2011). A key assertion is that there is a need for the “development of vocational interventions” to prevent youth from becoming NEET (Powers et al., 2015; Scott, J et al., 2013).

3.7.6 Irish NEETs and gender

In a recent report on Irish NEETs, the OECD highlighted that Ireland had a low rate of gender disparity amongst NEETs. However, Ireland had, along with the UK, the highest number (11\(^{10}\)) of single parent NEETs in the OECD (Carcillo, 2015). The high level of single parent NEETs points to well noted childcare challenges in Ireland (OECD, 2016). Indeed, the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan for Ireland (Irish Government, 2013) noted that of those identifying as ‘inactive’ 60% were carers –

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\(^9\) OECD disability table available here: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933405006

\(^{10}\) Based on 2010 CSO numbers provided to OECD researchers.
primarily young women aged 22 to 24 who were looking after children. However, NEET rates for women in Ireland, at 12%, were lower than in most OECD countries. This is largely due to the recession having a greater impact on male employment (particularly in the construction sector). It is worth noting that prior to the recession, Irish female NEET rates were almost 50% higher. This point is underlined by three factors: inactivity rates of women, below average employment rates of mothers and that Ireland has the second highest childcare costs in the OECD\textsuperscript{11} (OECD, 2016).

3.7.7 Irish NEETs benefit access

Research found poverty rates are higher amongst NEETs than non-NEETs, but the gap is less significant than in other OECD countries. Driven primarily by high youth unemployment, over one fourth of young people received either disability or unemployment benefits at some point during a 12-month period, compared to less than 10% in other OECD countries. The benefit system in Ireland is seen to be doing “an excellent job in lifting youth out of poverty” (OECD, 2016). Close to 70% of youth who would be below the poverty line before receiving benefits are lifted out of poverty by these benefits, which marks the best performance across the OECD.

3.8 Policy context for youth unemployment and NEETs

3.8.1 Overview

With youth unemployment in the EU reaching record highs, NEETs have moved to the centre of policymakers’ attention, including in the objectives established for the EU’s main strategy, Europe 2020 and in the European Youth Guarantee. The G20 has also set a target to reduce low-skilled NEET or youth working in the informal sector by 15% by 2025 (Kern, 2013; OECD, 2016).

3.8.2 Policy intervention approaches

Research into NEETs suggests that intervention methods fall broadly into the following categories (Maguire, 2013):

- **Early intervention** – programmes aimed at early warning systems to identify youth at risk of becoming NEET. Programmes are preventative in nature ranging from early childhood education through benefit provision to interventions in school curricula.
- **Reintegration** – programmes, which identify youth who have become NEET and are geared to re-engage and support individuals. Programmes often range from mentoring and soft skill development to benefit provision, case management, and monitoring.
- **Labour market measures** – programmes are geared towards encouraging employers, typically through incentives, to stimulate demand for youth employment, i.e. apprenticeship programmes or work experience. Partnerships with educational institutions are also common. Critically, these programmes may not reach the most disadvantaged without appropriate reintegration measures in place.

SICAP and its service provision to NEETs fits the second category, with SICAP providers providing personal planning and supports to enable NEETs to access work, education or training and supporting them to maintain their engagement in those.

\textsuperscript{11} Ireland’s childcare costs in terms of net cost as a percentage of family net income is 41.6% as opposed to the average OECD country index of 15% (OECD, 2016).
3.8.3 EU policy and funding

The European Youth Guarantee is the main European youth employment policy instrument, committing Member States to ensuring that all young people under the age of 25 years receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship. The European Social Fund addresses this commitment directly and integrates the EU funding instrument for the Youth Guarantee dedicated to NEET youth, the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI). According to a 2016 report, the YEI has supported some 1.4 million NEETs across the EU Member States since it was established in 2013 (European Commission, 2016).

In Ireland, the European Social Fund is matched by the Irish Government to provide a total of €1.15bn in investment to more than 20 national measures, set out in the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020. One of four priorities in ESF PEIL (2014-2020) implements YEI nationally to support measures dedicated to NEETs. Measures under this priority are funded equally between the ESF, the YEI and the Irish Government. SICAP is one of these measures and had a total budget of €6m to support NEET participants in 2015 and 2016. Under shared management arrangements, DRCD is responsible for managing this allocation to SICAP.

Figure 5 below illustrates how the national measures under Priority 4 of ESF PEIL (2014-2020), which implement the YEI interact and complement one other.

![Figure 5: YEI programmes as of December 2015 (McGarry & Fitzpatrick, 2015).](image)

A pilot project for Youth Guarantee in Ireland was undertaken in Ballymun in October 2013. Ballymun Youth Guarantee strives to ensure engagement in work (or form of work experience) or education of all 18-24 year olds in Ballymun within four months of either an Intreo registration or a ‘1-2-1’ meeting with a guidance counsellor for those already registered. The project is viewed to have had positive impact on decreasing the number of under 25 year olds on the Live Register (Devlin, 2015)\(^\text{13}\).

3.8.4 Irish policy directed at NEETs

The Irish government’s policy for job creation and employment is framed by two key documents, the Action Plan for Jobs and Pathways to Work. Overseen by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI), the Action Plan for Jobs is directed at stimulating employment growth. The DJEI has developed programmes, such as Springboard, which provides courses for qualifications needed in growing enterprise sectors, or Momentum, which helps the long-term unemployed to gain skills in occupational sectors.

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\(^\text{12}\) Intreo, operated by DEASP, is a single point of contact for all employment and income supports for both employers and jobseekers.

\(^\text{13}\) Live Register captures people out of work or education, including single parents in receipt of One Parent Family payment, individuals in receipt of a disability payment and young unemployed (under 18) (O’Reilly, 2015).
Pathways to Work, overseen by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP\textsuperscript{14}), includes measures to move individuals who are long-term unemployed, inactive or are young unemployed into work. Priority is given to upskilling youth to move them away from NEET status (Irish Government, 2015). This included the creation of Intreo, a ‘one stop shop’ for support payments, job assistance and referrals, including to SICAP providers. Other programmes include JobPath (replacing JobBridge), which is directed at long term unemployed (more than 12 months), and the JobSeekers benefit and allowance.

The EU Youth Employment Initiative helps to implement Ireland’s Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan ‘Pathways to Work’ and the Action Plan for Jobs, integrating programmes such as Springboard as measures under the ESF PEIL (2014-2020), including measures dedicated to supporting NEETs.

### 3.9 Emerging good practice

#### 3.9.1 Overview

Given the high level of attention on NEETs by international bodies, governments and policy makers, there is a surprising lack of robust evaluations or research on programmes and policy effectiveness related to supporting young people that are NEET. Highlighting this lack of information, Eurofound called for more research; specifically, the documentation of qualitative approaches “to build up the evidence base on process-related aspects of delivery and experiences of progression along employability pathways” (Eurofound (a), 2015, p. 56)\textsuperscript{15}.

#### 3.9.2 Undertaking formal needs analysis and research

Just as NEETs are not homogeneous, neither are the local and national environs within which programmes operate. Efforts to ascertain specific local needs, barriers, potential partners, and compositions of NEET populations are critical to the foundation of programme development (European Commission (a), 2016). Involvement of the ‘third sector’\textsuperscript{16} has been shown to be useful in the needs analysis process and research required to understand the local environ. In addition to expertise and financial resources, they can often bring an employer perspective to help to identify key challenges (Third Sector Capital Partners, 2013; Eurofound (a), 2015). Research has also pointed to the importance of engaging with relevant agencies (such as SOLAS) and potential target employers in the creation of NEET programmes. This helps to ensure training programmes align with identified market opportunities and support development of mutually beneficial partnerships (Levels et al., 2014; Kelly & McGuiness, 2014).

#### 3.9.3 Structures to ensure good information management

Robust data systems for evaluating needs of the NEET population as well as recording progress and outcomes are essential to ensure effective programme planning and improvements. (Mawn et al, 2017; Devlin, 2015; Carcillo, 2015; Gupta et al., 2016). Technology solutions and information sharing protocols are crucial for monitoring and evaluation, particularly given service user engagement across multiple agencies. Good practice in data management demonstrates that

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\textsuperscript{14} In June 2017, the Department of Social Protection (DSP) became the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

\textsuperscript{15} While outside the scope of this literature review, there are a number of evaluated early interventions programmes that show success in preventing young people from becoming NEETs. These include in-school identification of vulnerable youth to high-quality, formal early childhood education programmes, such as the Perry Preschool Program, HeadStart, and the Abecedarian Programme. Programmes have demonstrated positive effects for disadvantaged children and higher economic returns than interventions later in the child’s development (Heckman, 2008).

\textsuperscript{16} General term for alliances of any of the following organisations to address social issues: philanthropic, for-profit, not-for-profit, or government/public agencies.
having systems and structures to support good data management, such as clear outcomes, project managers or champions, audit processes, and clear team goals increases staff adherence to data management processes and ultimately enhances programme quality (Galliers & Leidner, 2003; Turner et al., 2012; Ní Ógáin et al., 2013; Fruchterman, 2016; Weigensberg et al., 2012).

3.9.4 Skilled and engaged staff

Staff and their ability to engage in building trusting, supportive, mutually respectful relationships with NEETs is viewed as critical to programme success (Eurofound (a), 2015; European Commission (a), 2016; Gupta et al., 2016; Pierce, 2009; O’Connor, 2010). Staff play a crucial role in the success of programmes addressing NEETs, from government agencies through to local community organisations. Programmes that work directly with NEETs have identified the following broad ranging staff skills, in addition to formal education in a related field, as important for successful engagement and progression of NEETs (Pierce, 2009; Gupta et al., 2016; Eurofound (a), 2015; Blanchet-Cohen & Salazar, 2009; Smyth & Eaton-Erickson, 2009; Bowie & Bronte-Tinkew, 2006):

- cultural competence,
- capacity to use a range of work approaches and models to change behaviours,
- creative problem-solving, critical thinking, and ability to actively listen,
- excellent at organizing, managing and completing multiple complex projects and tasks simultaneously with thoroughness, accuracy, timeliness and good humour,
- high levels of emotional intelligence, empathy, and grit,
- life experience and/or overcoming personal struggle.

Research has also highlighted that investment in professional development of service providers benefits programme quality and outcomes for participants (Pierce, 2009; Eurofound (a), 2015; Bowie & Bronte-Tinkew, 2006). Further, opportunities for staff to develop applicable skills have been shown to increase professional engagement, as has:

- feeling ‘attached’ to the mission of the organisation,
- contributing through input and decision making,
- being empowered to do work and innovate,
- clearly understood expectations,
- positive relationship with management,
- opportunities to develop and grow, and
- pay expectations being met (Opportunity Knocks, 2011).

Successfully working with and progressing NEETs requires staff and organisations which possess the traits noted above. A recent report, which reviewed success factors that lead to high quality outcomes, regardless of sector, identified creativity, innovation, enthusiasm, commitment, and strong emotional connections to the work as key (Harvard Business Review, 2013).

3.9.5 Engaging youth in programme design

Organisations, such as UNICEF and Advocates for Youth, a leading youth organisation in the US, highlight that young people have rights in relation to being engaged in planning the services they receive17. They also make the point that substantial benefits can be derived from ensuring young people’s participation in programme design (Advocates for Youth, 2005).

In the 2015 report, Eurofound emphasised the need for youth to actively participate in both design and implementation, citing it as a critical success factor in many programmes within Europe. They

also noted youth involvement was key to the transferability – the more involved youth were, the more likely the programme would be “perceived as relevant and useful by the target groups” in multiple country contexts (Eurofound (a), 2015, p. 127). The report highlights various ways youth can be involved, from the design phase through to assessment of programmes efficacy. Academic research also points to the many advantages of involving youth in programme design, evaluation, and adaptation with particular benefit in programmes reaching intended groups of youth and building their capacity for non-cognitive skills (Mason et al., 2013; Head, 2011).

### 3.9.6 Individualisation of support packages for youth

Programme planning benefits from individualisation. Within a core programme framework, individualised development plans that are co-designed with participants are a key component to increased likelihood of continued engagement and of individuals sustaining improvements in the longer term (Patton, 2011). Strategies noted include combinations of “workshops, peer to peer support, mentoring, advocacy, counselling and guidance delivered by specially trained professionals who empower young people to make informed choices” (European Commission (a), 2016, p. 13). These strategies necessitate quality information sharing and collaboration amongst NEETs and programmes.

A recent, qualitative study in the UK found that good quality, independent information, advice and guidance was critical to engaging NEETs in identifying and accessing appropriate education and training (BIS, 2013). This was echoed by a longitudinal study by the UK’s National Children’s Bureau (Joshi et al., 2013), which emphasised the need for clear, detailed and consistent communication to youth participants about their contributions and impact in research projects – expressing a desire to be treated as integral and important.

### 3.9.7 Intensive supports are likely to be more successful

OECD reports summarise one important overall learning - for high need NEETs, “low-intensity short-term interventions like job-search assistance workshops, are unlikely to be sufficient” to progress to non-NEET status (Carcillo, 2015, p. 20). This assertion was validated in a recent systemic analysis of NEET interventions. The analysis showed that interventions were diverse, centred on employment (not on education or training) but it also suggests that more intensive programmes increased employment and wages over the long term. Formal training resulted in significant increases in educational achievement (Mawn et al, 2017). Measures designed to reduce NEET figures require approaches that encompass prevention, re-engagement of the most challenged and hardest to reach, as well as active labour market policies for the young unemployed. Research cautions that hasty ‘quick fixes or wins’ will not facilitate or maintain meaningful movement towards non-NEET status (Maguire, 2013; Sissons & Jones, 2012; Carcillo, 2015). An example of a well evaluated programme that employs long term intensive supports is ROCA, a NEET programme working with high-risk youth in Massachusetts. ROCA utilises an evidenced based, High Risk Youth Intervention Model targeting disengaged youth with two years of intensive programming and two years of less intensive follow-up and support (Pierce, 2009). ROCA’s programming is a model garnering national acclaim due to its success in working with the most excluded young people (Third Sector Capital Partners, 2013).

### 3.9.8 Joint approach and interagency co-ordination (including engagement with employers)

Ensuring that agencies supporting NEETs have harmonised approaches is crucial as often no single organisation is able to address all needs (Devlin, 2015). Further, successful interventions will most likely rely on a case managed, high contact approach for NEETs that will necessitate joint working (Mawn et al, 2017; Devlin, 2015). This was echoed in the Irish Ballymun pilot which had “more
intensive, systematic engagement” when compared to standard Intreo engagement (Devlin, 2015; O’Reilly, 2015). Literature indicates the following as good practice factors (Advocates for Youth, 2005; Brunello & Schlotter, 2011; Devlin, 2015; European Commission (a), 2016; O’Reilly, 2015; Third Sector Capital Partners, 2013):

- close collaboration with all stakeholders (including employers and NEETs),
- formalised by agreement and working processes when appropriate,
- specifically identified roles and responsibilities of stakeholders based on strengths,
- information and data sharing agreements, and
- supported and incentivised partnership work.

In a number of EU countries, partnership is not just contractual but physical in that agencies are co-located in a one-stop shop to address unemployment issues specific to NEETs. In Germany, the Youth Employment Agencies operate with front line staff from youth work, career guidance, youth welfare services and public employment services. In addition, cooperation with schools aims to reduce early school leaving in co-located facilities throughout most of Germany. While each department has its own mandate, there are cooperation agreements, service information exchanges and data sharing with many local offices co-organising discussions on emerging local needs and streamlining supports with much success (European Commission (a), 2016).

ROCA approaches joint collaboration differently but with similar success. Staff are directed and evaluated on their ability to create layers of relationships amongst partner organisations (Wheeler, 2006). ROCA has also dedicated significant resources to building and formalising multiple pathways in and amongst agencies ensuring structured communications and accountabilities to support continued partnership and positive working. This was critical not only for clear goal setting and outcome measurement, but also to make certain that the programmes had robust feedback loops to support continuous quality improvement (Third Sector Capital Partners, 2013; Pierce, 2009; Kasturi Rangan & Chase, 2015).

3.9.9 Programme flexibility

A critical lesson arising from the Ballymun Pilot was the need for effective research to inform the organisation’s understanding of NEETs and their needs in order to direct resource allocation and staff capacity building (O’Reilly, 2015). Persistent programme disengagement from NEETs with the highest needs (lowest level of education and work experience) highlighted the necessity for flexibility in programme outreach (Devlin, 2015).

@LIKE, a programme aimed at reducing NEETs in Riverside California, allowed NEETs to re-engage multiple times, acknowledged NEETs often had periods of engagement, disengagement, and re-engagement and the programme needed to remove unnecessary barriers to re-engaging participants after periods of absence (Gupta et al., 2016). Similarly, the ROCA programme is geared around the understanding that persistence and adaptation and meeting NEETs where they are at is required to ensure their progression (Pierce, 2009). Research has supported these findings demonstrating that flexibility in service delivery is a crucial component of programme success. Those organisations able to adapt to business and/ or participant needs are more likely to be efficient and successful (Weigensberg et al., 2012).

3.9.10 NEETs targeted outreach and media

Successful programmes need to be innovative in finding new ways to reach and involve target groups. Targeted outreach is considered key to engaging disfranchised young people. ‘Branding’ and marketing campaigns must also be targeted to NEETs in particular circumstances in order for these to be picked up within a technical and media saturated world (Morimoto & Friedland, 2011).
Inventive and comprehensive approaches to outreach are critical for NEETs, just as they are for potential partner agencies, employers and other stakeholders (Devlin, 2015). A 2016 evaluation of @LIKE highlighted how the programme employed a ‘feet on the ground’ recruitment and engagement strategy that included visiting non-traditional locations, such as tattoo parlours. Additionally, @LIKE had two dedicated staff roles to consistently engage and remove barriers for participants (Gupta et al., 2016). This echoes Eurofound’s report Social Inclusion of Young People (2015), which suggests a key approach to inclusion is to simplify access and bureaucratic procedures.

The ‘Find, Mind and Bind’ approach to NEET work in Belgium uses a partnership outreach approach amongst youth and community organisations – explicitly hiring outreach workers, with ‘wide social networks’ within the city. These individuals, who are often social workers by background, actively seek to meet and engage young people where they live and spend their time, such as in sports clubs or shopping malls (European Commission (c), 2016). Building trust and enhancing NEETs perceptions of social support services is core to increasing engagement given youth’s often negative experiences of services.

One of the core components of the ROCA programme is “Relentless Outreach and Follow Up”. Like other programmes, outreach workers meet NEETs where they are but workers are also expected to “relentlessly reconnect” and develop “transformational relationships”. The workers do this by “sticking with” young people over long periods and despite lack of engagement from young people. This is not a friendship but an intentional, effective and mutually respectful relationship where the worker, who is intensively trained in cognitive behavioural and motivation techniques, guides and supports the youth (Third Sector Capital Partners, 2013, p. 23). ROCA staff are trained to anticipate failures to engage as part of the process that can be overcome by their persistence.

3.9.11 The benefit of non-cognitive skill development

Non-cognitive skills (e.g. self-control, self-esteem, communication skills, emotional intelligence etc.) are just as important as cognitive ability measures (e.g. IQ, critical thinking skills etc. (Carcillo, 2015; Brunello & Schlotter, 2011; Cunha & Heckman, 2007; Almlund et al., 2011; Ivcevic & Brackett, 2014; Mendolia & Walker, 2014; Caliendo et al., 2010). Research has also noted the relative plasticity of non-cognitive skills for NEETs versus adults, and that they are essential for attaining cognitive skills and are “internal assets” that will eventually improve life outcomes (Almlund et al., 2011; Cunha & Heckman, 2007).

The involvement of behavioural change experts should be considered when designing programmes, particularly given research on non-cognitive skill development and its relevance to human capital accumulation (Mawn et al, 2017). Trained life coaches were an integral part of the @LIKE programme. They ensured participants had soft skills, including identifying areas of strengths and personal challenges and complementing work done by traditional case managers (Gupta et al., 2016). Akin to issues of behavioural change, research has noted the higher prevalence of mental health issues for NEETs. While efficacy has not been thoroughly researched, Eurofound’s report Social Inclusion of Young People (2015) highlights innovative approaches to addressing mental health challenges relevant to Irish NEETs.

Your Own Power is a Dutch programme which builds resilience by providing challenged youth with the tools to tackle their own problems with the help of their social network.

Cyberhouse is a programme in Denmark which provides online counselling services and sign-posting to young people in need of psychological support and advice.

Power is Within You is a Bulgarian programme training youth counsellors and social workers in methods to foster resilience in young people.
3.9.12 Supported personal planning and young people’s ownership of the plan

Personal planning, also known as care planning, is a key feature of many services which seek to support vulnerable service users to access complex state and NGO provided supports systems. This service provision has shown to increase client outcomes in the following fields: youth work (Third Sector Capital Partners, 2013; Gupta et al., 2016) and substance misuse (Smyth & Eaton-Erickson, 2009). In each instance, goals were developed collaboratively between dedicated staff and service users. This service gave users a sense of accountability and ownership, deemed critical to progression (Smyth & Eaton-Erickson, 2009).

3.10 Summary

The literature review provides a summary of key issues in relation to the target group of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) and the programmes that exist to support them in Ireland and elsewhere. Emerging good practice noted in this review and NEETs related programming highlights considerations in addressing NEETs in Ireland. Some key considerations are proposed below:

- Are programming considerations based on a thorough understanding of the local environs and needs of NEETs cohort to be supported? Is there enough flexibility, in programme design, outreach, and incentives (positive and negative) to meet the assessed needs of the Irish NEET cohort?
- Does the organisations structure and infrastructure integrate with other lateral agencies and stakeholders to minimise bureaucracy, facilitate information management, data sharing, and create reasonable ease of engagement? Does the infrastructure enable longer term, supportive, trusting relationships with service users, referral partners and stakeholders?
- Are there clear programme quality standards and outcome measurements? Is there sufficient investment in hiring qualified staff and in the professional development of those delivering services to contribute to achieving these outcomes?
- Is there programming individualisation where possible and programmes include components that empower young people to make informed choices and take ownership of their care path or plan?
- Is non-cognitive skill development a core programme component and viewed by stakeholders to be as important as cognitive skills for progression in becoming non-NEET? Have behavioural change experts, alongside other key stakeholders, been involved in programme design and/or do they have a core service provision component?
- Is there a strong, joint approach in service delivery that involves collaboration and working partnerships with all stakeholders? Do all stakeholders have clear, strength based roles and responsibilities? Are there sufficient supports and incentives to sustain these partnerships?
- Do outreach efforts appropriately target NEET cohorts, account for disengagement, and take advantage of technology where appropriate?
- Underscored in the literature review is also the urgent need for further research and analysis of programmes positively impacting NEET populations, and which are aimed at understanding critical success factors generally as well as for specific cohorts of NEETs.
4 Overview of SICAP engagement with NEETs and outcomes

4.1 Overview

This chapter provides a profile of NEETs supported under the SICAP programme. The chapter details the range of supports young people receive and their outcomes in relation to engagement in education and progression into employment.

4.2 Demographic information

4.2.1 Gender

NEET participants supported by SICAP consisted of 4,747 males (59%) and 3,322 females (41%). Monaghan had the highest proportion of participants who were male (70%), while Limerick had the highest proportion of females (56%).

4.2.2 Age

All NEET participants in SICAP are aged between 15 and 24 years. 9% (720) of SICAP participants are under the age of 18, 41% (3,306) are aged between 18 and 20 and 50% (4,043) are 21 years or older, as shown in the Figure 6 below:

![Figure 6: NEETs by age](image)

4.2.3 Geographic distribution of NEETs

The NEETs supported by SICAP live in all of the 26 counties in the Republic of Ireland. The largest number of NEETs are located in Dublin (22% or 1,785), followed by Cork (8% or 672) and Wexford (7% or 575). The smallest number of NEETs within the programme can be found in Meath (0.5% or 41), Roscommon (1% or 85) and Cavan (1% or 109).

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18 As a percentage of all NEETs supported under SICAP according to the IRIS database.
Leinster accounts for more than one in two (54%) NEETs supported by SICAP with more than one in five NEETs (22% or 1,785) residing in Dublin. This is followed by Munster with 29% of participants. Connaught/Ulster with 17% account for the fewest number of NEETs. The distribution of participants at a provincial level is proportionally similar to the total distribution of 15 – 24 year olds in the Republic of Ireland.

4.2.4 Semi-urban/rural or urban centre

Almost two thirds of NEETs in SICAP are located in semi-urban or rural areas (65%) compared with slightly more than one third in urban centers\(^\text{19}\) (35%). This distribution of participants is proportionally similar to the total distribution of 15 – 24 year olds in the Republic of Ireland, with 67% of all 15 – 24-year olds in the state located in semi-urban or rural areas and 33% located in urban centers\(^\text{20}\).

4.2.5 Highest educational attainment prior to entering SICAP

Almost half of NEETs are educated to Leaving Certificate level (48% or 3,888), followed by Junior Certificate (25% or 2,015). The smallest number of NEETs report being educated to Postgraduate Diploma or Degree level (>1% or 40) followed by NEETs with no formal education (2% or 129). The proportion of NEETs, whose education level spans from no formal education to upper secondary level, is much higher (80%) than of all people aged 15 – 24 in Ireland (52%). Less NEETs have

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\(^{19}\) Urban centre areas are defined as Cork City, Dublin City, Dublin Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, Dublin South, Galway City, Limerick City, Waterford City. Semi-urban and rural areas are defined as all other areas.

\(^{20}\) cso.ie/en/databases/
educational attainment of technical/vocational level and postgraduate diploma or degree (21%) compared to State level of 48% for all people aged 15 - 24.

Figure 8: Level of NEETs educational attainment

4.2.6 Ethnicity

When compared to the general population, there is a noticeable over representation of Irish Travellers and under representation of youth, who identify themselves as white and Irish or white and non-Irish, participating in SICAP. NEETs supported under SICAP, who report as being white and Irish, account for just over three quarters of all NEETs compared to 85% of the general 15 – 24 year old population. Similarly, only 6% identified themselves as white and non-Irish compared to 8% of the general population under this category. Conversely, Irish Travelers make up just under 5% of SICAP participants, despite making up only 1% of the general population aged 15 - 24. The amount of NEETs identifying as Asian (1%) or black (2%) were relatively comparable to their share in the general population of this age, 2% and 1% respectively.

Figure 9: Ethnicity of NEETs

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21 Figures for the general population of 15 – 24 year olds are used here to give a general perspective as we do not have figures for the general population of NEETs in Ireland.

Figure 9 shows that 82% of participants reported being white Irish or from other white background and less than one in ten reported being from minority groups. This differs slightly from the ethnicity of 15 – 24 year olds nationally, with white Irish and other white groups accounting for 93% in the whole population, and minorities accounting for 5% (2% no response)\textsuperscript{23}.

4.2.7 Lone parents

Six percent of all NEETs report as being lone parents. Eight in ten (79% or 401) of NEETs who are lone parents are female.

4.2.8 Disability

Seven percent of NEETs supported under SICAP have a disability. This compares with 8% of Irish youths, aged 15 – 24 years, who reported in the 2011 census that they had a disability\textsuperscript{24}. More than nine in ten (93% or 501) NEETs who are disabled are 18 or older.

4.2.9 Homeless or at risk of homelessness

Four percent of NEETs supported under SICAP reported being homeless or being at risk of homelessness. One in five NEETs who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are from a minority group (20% or 65).

4.2.10 Jobless household

42% (3,360) of NEETs report that they come from a jobless household, the same share (3,356) that indicated that they did not come from a jobless household. 16% did not provide response to the question on jobless household.

4.2.11 Disadvantage indicator\textsuperscript{25}

The disadvantage indicator was created by amalgamating seven indicators of disadvantage\textsuperscript{26}. NEETs who reported none of the seven indicators were classified as having no indicators of disadvantage, NEETs who reported one or two indicators were classified as disadvantaged, and NEETs who reported three or more indicators were classified as very disadvantaged. The majority of NEETs are considered to be disadvantaged with 66% (5,289) of them being very disadvantaged. Only 8% (634) of participants did not have any indicators of disadvantage.

4.3 Supports and interventions received by NEETs

This section gives an overview of the types of supports\textsuperscript{27} and interventions received by NEETs. Almost two thirds (65% or 5,240) of NEETs received at least one employment support, a little under half received education and training supports (46% or 3,751), a little over a quarter received auxiliary supports (28% or 2,282) and 8% (674) received follow-up supports. The table below identifies the interventions received.

\textsuperscript{23} cso.ie/en/databases
\textsuperscript{24} cso.ie/en/databases/
\textsuperscript{25} See Appendix 5 for methodology of creation and explanation of the Disadvantage Indicator.
\textsuperscript{26} Indicators of disadvantage: (1) scoring disadvantaged or below on the HP deprivation index, (2) being from a minority group, (3) being a lone parent, (4) being disabled, (5) being from a jobless household, (6) being homeless or at risk of homelessness, (7) being educated to a Leaving Certificate level (ISCED 3) or less.
\textsuperscript{27} See Appendix 6 for information on the creation and categorisation of supports received by NEETs.
Table 3: Support and interventions received by NEETs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support services</th>
<th>% of NEETs who received supports/interventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment supports</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and training supports</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary supports</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up supports</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One to one intervention</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group meeting intervention</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information session intervention</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop intervention</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network intervention</td>
<td>&gt;1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4 Outcome and progression data

Overall 55% of NEETs in SICAP engaged in education. 56% of all males were engaged in comparison to 53% of all females. Overall 14% of NEETs engaged in SICAP progressed into employment. 15% of all males progressed in comparison to 12% of all females.

4.5 Summary

All NEETs supported by SICAP are aged between 15 and 24 years, with males accounting for almost six out of ten participants. The geographic spread of NEETs in SICAP is similar to the general population of 15 – 24 year olds in Ireland. Four in five NEETs are educated to a Leaving Certificate level or lower when they enter the programme. Within the NEET population in SICAP, there is a small number of participants who report as being from a minority group, being a lone parent, being disabled or being homeless or at risk of homelessness. In regard to the disadvantage indicator, slightly more than nine in ten NEETs are classified as being disadvantaged or very disadvantaged. 55% of all NEETs in SICAP programmes successfully engaged in education and 14% progressed into employment following interventions.
5 The perspective of service providers

5.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the key good practice themes which arose from 42 interviews undertaken with managers within the SICAP providers. The themes were grouped and presented under four categories: 1) engaging NEETs, 2) working with NEETs, 3) partnership working and 4) organisational development.

5.2 Engaging NEETs

5.2.1 Theme one: Engage young people by having a community outreach presence and working with families

20 service providers highlighted the importance of working with families and communities in order to engage young people in services. Encouraging family members to support young people in their household to attend the programme was considered to be effective for making young people aware of the service, and encouraging them to access it. 14 people emphasised the importance of outreach - communicating directly with families by going door to door, or going to social or leisure activities where families are:

“You have to be prepared to get in the car and go knocking on doors to get people”.

(Interview 4)

“We ask community members – do you have you a brother, sister, daughter or son out of work and we ask them to spread the word. It works”.

(Interview 28)

The importance of linking in with the community, not just the people in it but the organisations who serve them, was also emphasised by a number of participants:

“We go to the homeless hostel, we went to services for ex-offenders, we went to parenting services, we went to youth services.”

(Interview 28)

It was noted by two interviewees that outreach requires a specific skill set, and that not all staff are equipped for this. Participants acknowledged that in order to ensure that staff have the skills to take a proactive outreach approach, additional training, mentoring or shadowing may be required.

**Spotlight: Getting out in the community gets young people in**

The team in Wexford Local Development were emphatic about the importance of understanding the local community, being part of it and being out in the community, as a means to engaging young people, especially those with the most needs. They felt that only by going into community spaces and going to places where young people meet, were they able to locate hard to reach young people and tell them about the supports available. ‘Our community development team plays football in local greens. They go to the local markets, to post offices on ‘dole day’, to online local Facebook groups, and to local ETB and LTI programmes to try find out who’s having trouble and who needs a bit of extra help’. This approach meant that young people not associated with youth groups or other support services also had a chance to engage with the SICAP programme and get its benefits.
5.2.2 Theme two: Social media is more useful for sustaining engagement rather than initially engaging young people

27 participants discussed how social media had been useful in engaging, retaining or working with young people. However, there were very mixed views on the usefulness of social media. The overriding theme was that social media is preferable as a tool for sustaining engagement rather than initially recruiting young people to participate. Specifically, Facebook was not considered to be particularly useful in initiating or sustaining engagement. This was largely seen to be due to the fact that young people will not join the organisational Facebook pages. Nine organisations felt that social media is not a useful tool for engaging young people:

“Facebook is used but it is difficult to translate into participation or ‘bums on seats.” (Interview 25)

“We paid for Google Adwords and Facebook ads, and we didn’t get any response.” (Interview 29)

In the instances where social media was considered useful, organisations utilised existing high traffic sites to connect with a specific target group, as highlighted by the following quote:

“[To access parents] We use the local Mamma’s Swap and Sell pages in Facebook and this gets them in the door.” (Interview 39)

Six organisations commented that they were not using social media as well as they could. A number of organisations provided positive examples of how they were using social media to support young people to attend or to share with their peer group, once they had engaged with the service. One service providing a work placement course used a WhatsApp group for ‘good news’ announcements. Participants posted in the group to let each other know about positive work placement experiences as well as when they moved on to new programmes or jobs. Staff felt that positive reinforcement through social media encouraged young people to stay engaged. Most positive commentary on social media related to WhatsApp or similar free texting sites, where these supported young people in establishing contact outside of the group:

“Setting up a WhatsApp group can be great in terms of gently applying pressure to come to the group. The participant has to explain to the group rather than just you, why they can’t attend. Sneaky but effective.” (Interview 23)

Posters and newspaper adverts were considered to be the least effective form of engaging young people.

5.2.3 Theme three: Providing short, taster and interest-based programmes on what young people want increases engagement and progression

25 interviewees highlighted that providing taster or shorter interest-based courses was effective in encouraging more reluctant young people to engage with the programme. The decision to use this approach was often based on staff members’ experience of working with disengaged young people and an understanding that for many young people, going into a higher-commitment programme or even one-to-one sessions may be too challenging as a first step:
“It’s about seeing where they are at and finding a way to meet their expectations. We had a group of girls who were very worn out – they had left school after their junior cert and little had worked for them. We had discussions with that group and they were interested in health and beauty so we set up taster sessions on courses for them on health, fitness and beauty. We ran three sessions on each. It was a very good starting point. We had some engagement from that group of girls then afterwards.” (Interview 35)

The importance of short programmes as an introduction to higher commitment programmes was highlighted by five participants:

“The most effective programmes for those who are ‘lost or lacking direction’ are those where there is a truly bottom-up approach, where the clients’ interests, personality, values, and experience are drawn out and insights developed for the individual with regard to what they want and what they can do next.” (Interview 2)

A smaller number of participants discussed the importance of low-commitment activities as a means to build trust with young people, as well as increase social skills necessary for engagement in group work.

“A course was put on, specifically for those that were overtly involved with computer games and were isolated, enabling them to continue to play games but in a more social setting.”

(Interview 1)

One interviewee identified the First Step Programme28 (DSP internship programme for people under 35), as a useful programme as this allows participants to build their work engagement incrementally. This approach allows for young people to have a greater role in determining the pace and quantity of their engagement, while working towards accreditation.

In relation to the content of taster programmes, ten interviewees highlighted the importance of understanding the real interests of young people. This requires talking to young people to ensure that the service is providing programmes based on articulated rather than imagined needs and interests. Consultation was generally undertaken with groups of young people and through one-to-one discussion. Participants also highlighted the logistical challenges to this approach, namely that it is not always possible to provide programmes based on the unique interests of young people and matching programme ideas to levels of demand.

A number of participants also highlighted the importance of having essential services or interest activities available to young people within their centre, examples included photocopying facilitates and a youth café or social space.

Key to the effectiveness of a taster programme approach is having very clear pathways into further one-to-one and group supports, to ensure progression of young people considered at risk. The connection between a taster programme and next steps is generally centred around key staff, who undertake to build relationships and follow up with young people to support their next steps. The spotlight below provides a good illustration of how services can bridge initial interest based programmes to the core work of SICAP.

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5.2.4 Theme four: Ask about transport and childcare challenges and negotiate solutions to these

23 interviewees named transport as a barrier for young people’s engagement. This was a particular concern for service providers in rural areas. A solution frequently employed was satellite service provision, an option provided by at least seven PIs. This involved providing services in alternative community based sites in smaller towns or rural centres, rather than asking young people to come into the SICAP centre. This is highlighted in the following quotes:

“In terms of transport, we go out to the market towns and work there as much as we can. We disperse our services. Rural transport infrastructure is very poor.” (Interview 36)

“Everything we do is outreach in their location. If not, we provide the transport to us.” (Interview 34)

Other solutions were to provide transport to the service either by paying a supplier or working with partners who had a transport option. Creation of a public transport fund, which could be accessed by young people on application, was also a commonly used mechanism for addressing this issue. PIs who had negotiated use of funding for a discretionary transport fund commented on the difference it had made to individual outcomes, as shown below:
“We have a small transport fund; vouchers are paid equivalent to bus costs; there isn’t much take up but it made a difference to 4 or 5 people. You can only avail of this fund for one-year, and it’s tied to attendance.” (Interview 29)

However, one PI stated that this use of funds as well as the expenditure on driving lessons was not approved by their LCDC. They found both rules inhibiting. Another solution used to address the challenge of transport was to change start and finish times for programmes, ensuring that times were aligned with local public transport schedules. In one case, SICAP successfully negotiated with a third-party education provider to do this. A lack of access to childcare was also noted as an issue for NEETs, this being raised by three interviewees. Again this was most commonly addressed through provision of a fund:

“It took us a long time to devise it but we have put in a policy for providing childcare costs, this involved invoices being provided to us from a registered childminder or childcare service, which we then reimbursed.” (Interview 40)

The spotlight below highlights how working together and creativity can solve some of the challenges raised by a lack of rural transport infrastructure.

**Spotlight: Working with third level providers to provide satellite education and change start times**

South Kerry Development, an organisation serving a largely rural and semi-rural area, managed the transport challenge through a number of means. One of these was through focused negotiation with education providers. This negotiation resulted in the local university (University College Cork) agreeing to deliver a community development certificate programme in a satellite venue, accessible by young people living in rural areas. This meant students did not have to travel two hours to attend a course where the university is located. This innovation made a positive difference to the number of young people progressing in education. South Kerry Development is currently looking at other ways to make education more accessible for their clients in rural communities. This includes working with educational providers to develop programmes that start later in the day or by delivering more outreach courses.

5.3 Working with NEETs

5.3.1 Theme five: Coaching is effective for young people with lower motivation

28 interviewees emphasised the importance of providing individualised supports based on young people’s needs and cited coaching and mentoring as effective approaches. There was widespread recognition that young people within the NEET category are heterogeneous. The interviewees commented on the fact that the term NEET is imprecise and not indicative of the variety of needs presenting within this target group. Nine participants made explicit reference to the existence of different categories of NEETs. One respondent segmented the NEET population by their
preparedness to re-engage in learning or employment supports, in particular referring to the High/Low Matrix coaching model\textsuperscript{29}, outlined in the following quote:

“Our, they are made up of four groups, those that are skilled and motivated, unskilled and motivated, skilled and de-motivated and unskilled and de-motivated – and you have to tailor your programmes accordingly. It doesn’t make sense to shove people who are already motivated onto a life skills course.” (Interview 21)

The high/low skills matrix, shown below in Figure 10, is an adapted version of a coaching tool used to describe the fact that different young people will benefit from different interventions. This model is based on two metrics: the level of skill and level of motivation, however others could also be applied, such as the level of social disadvantage and/or case complexity. The model highlights the fact raised by a large number of interviewees that different interventions have different resource requirements.

15 interviewees highlighted that individuals with low motivation need a flexible and tailored approach and significantly more supports. Coaching/mentoring, were the terms used most often to describe the process where staff assist young people to:

- clarify their feelings, ideas and goals;
- set goals and plan steps to achieve these;
- follow-up with clients to review progress;
- provide on-going support to address barriers;
- challenge ineffective thinking or incorrect assumptions.

Two interviewees mentioned that they had staff trained in coaching and five more named coaching training as an upcoming need for their team. One interviewee pointed out that coaching training had given their team a common language and skills set which greatly improved service provision.

Coaching was viewed as an important step prior to CV work for demotivated young people. It was felt that to do this well, staff need well-developed coaching skills, as well as time to work at the client’s pace. The fact that this approach is either overt or subtle is highlighted below:

\textit{Figure 10: Version of the high/low matrix (made popular in “The Tao of coaching” by Max Landsberg).}

\textsuperscript{29} See Landsberg, Max (2015), \textit{The Tao of coaching: boost your effectiveness at work by inspiring and developing around you}, p. 66.
In some cases, it [coaching] was an overt part of the support with carved out mentoring time. In other cases [we do] “mentoring by stealth”, the act of providing support and advice within the group sessions or simply being available for students when they needed it. (Interview 1)

An important aspect of coaching is encouraging realism and managing expectations. Eight interviewees spoke about the need to balance supportive encouragement with constructive challenge to help young people develop realistic goals and to challenge unhelpful negative thinking, as highlighted below:

“Our staff are quite honest with young people and find a way to challenge this behaviour [quitting when things don’t work], they set some expectations with young people about the realities of our work and our engagement.” (Interview 35)

The difference between coaching/mentoring and guidance counselling was clarified by two interviewees. Many services refer clients to ETB for guidance services, which were regarded as an important resource for young people and a key part of an overall coaching approach:

“You use coaching skills... you may refer to someone in ETB who does guidance counselling, and this helps them see what may suit them. They use personality and interest tests – this really helps young people get a focus.” (Interview 29)

There was concern amongst respondents that if not managed well, the SICAP programme could favour those who are most ‘labour ready’, i.e. high skill and motivation, or the ‘low hanging fruit’ as described by one participant. Eight participants commented that more at risk young people were in danger of being overlooked, as services needed to ensure SICAP targets are met. This is conveyed in the following quote:

“We train facilitators to do x programme. It’s a great programme but it’s a six to eight-week programme for young people experiencing mental ill health. That’s eight young people. However, if we work with x Youth Service and we do a workshop, 40 people at three sessions, the numbers are counted the same way which is great for our targets but it is quite cynical.” (Interview 35)

5.3.2 Theme six: Staff require an array of skills and appropriate time to work effectively with young people with complex needs

30 participants discussed the importance of relationship and trust building and the role of sustained one-to-one support as the foundation for assisting the progression of young people. Interviewees highlighted the importance of understanding the young people’s stories, with a focus on supporting young people to manage the life challenges which can affect their progression, such as a lack of family support, substance misuse or housing instability. The key outcome of this process is proactive referral to specialist support services, such as counselling/mental health services, community addiction programmes, youth or housing services. Follow-up with young people to ensure that referrals were appropriate was also considered a core part of this process.

Interviewees frequently highlighted the fact that a proportion of young people presented with a high complexity of need. Figure 11 below illustrates the range of needs young people experience that can
impact on their engagement with employment and education. In general, the more needs that a young person has from this list, the higher the case complexity. Case complexity also increases when there is one significant high impact challenge, such as substance use, homelessness or mental health.

Figure 11: Complexity of need

18 participants emphasised the importance of increasing the amount of time allocated to young people with complex needs. A gentle, open process which allows time for relationship building and fostering trust, as well as supporting the young person to access appropriate social supports, prior to engaging in employment and education supports is key. The importance of staff attitudes and soft skills was highlighted by almost all interviewees. This predominantly related to the need for staff to be authentic in their interactions and respectful of young people as experts in their own lives. The following key work attributes, noted by one or more interviewees, were considered essential to the work:

- authenticity
- understanding, tolerance and empathy
- open / non-judgemental communicator
- patience
- having unconditional positive regard (Rogerian approach)
- fairness
- clear and consistent boundaries
- positivity and solution-focused approach
- diligence, and having integrity in follow up.

Participants also identified a number of hard skills or knowledge areas deemed important for staff working with NEETs:

- Knowledge of issues such as:
  > economic inequality
  > community development
  > mental health
  > local services
- Skills including:
  > facilitation
  > advocacy
  > negotiation.

Eight participants emphasised the need to be open and not to be prescriptive in the relationship-building phase as well as the need to manage young people’s fears at the earliest possible time:

“Try avoiding overwhelming potential participants with ‘having to do a course’ when they first come in the door. Reassure them that linking in socially is good enough.” (Interview 10)

“I let them know that I can’t take away things from them like their payments, I am here to support them. They need to see we are not threatening.” (Interview 30)

Ensuring that the same staff member is working with the young person throughout their time with the service, was noted as good practice by a significant number of people, especially where the young person has a complex set of needs. The need to ensure that sufficient resources are available for staff to provide the time needed for the support of high complexity cases is discussed further in this report.

5.3.3 Theme seven: Complexity of need requires significant supports or ‘hand-holding’

12 PIs stated that ‘hand-holding’ was crucial to sustaining engagement of young people. ‘Hand-holding’ included:

- phoning young people to wake them up and/or remind them of appointments;
- making follow-up house-calls in the case of non-attendance;
- supporting young people to make appointments and, on occasion, attending appointments with them.

An intensive approach was deemed important for young people with high complexity cases or with low motivation or skills. Supporting young people to attend appointments was specifically named by eight interviewees as an important strategy for helping young people to make progress. It was felt that learning to keep appointments was in itself a skill that the programme was supporting:

“Reminders and texts... are useful for those with significant chaos in their lives. Attendance is part of the skill base we are supporting.” (Interview 28)

“We don’t just hand them the number, we support them to make the appointment, we call or they call, we fill the gaps, we hand hold. If we think they have the ability to make the appointment themselves, great, if they don’t, we support them by making the call, and possibly attending the appointment with them.” (Interview 30)

Two interviewees spoke about how, at first, their opinion on hand-holding was that staff were taking too much responsibility, and this was inefficient and/or disempowering to the young people supported. However, following discussion with staff and monitoring of clients development, their perspective changed to align with staff’s views. Essentially, when a client has complex needs or has low motivation/skills, hand-holding is a necessary form of mentoring and is effective in supporting change. Another common sentiment among providers was that hand-holding is about showing the young people, in actions and not just words, that they are cared for. This also has an effect of helping the young people to feel important and valued:
“We call in the morning before a session, this can be really helpful to convince them to engage and participate. Kids can sometimes feel like we’ve given up on them, but a phone call is a reminder that our staff haven’t.” (Interview 32)

One interviewee discussed how their service considered it important to follow the same approach with all young people in a group:

“We call them an hour before they are due to come in, but tell them beforehand that this is what you do... In this way, they don’t take it personally, it’s just what the project does. Be sure that if you are reminding one participant to attend a course... that you do it for all members of the class. It is tiresome but otherwise you run the risk of the young adult feeling they are been picked-on.” (Interview 8)

There were resource implications for services who used this hand-holding model, the most significant of which was time. Three interviewees were very specific in relation to the exact time implications, stating that while two interventions could be useful for a young person with mild needs, for a young person with complex needs or particularly low motivation, it was not unusual to receive ten or more interventions:

“For NEETs that have severe or complete disengagement or have suffered a serious drop in attainment... [there are often] complex and multifaceted factors contributing to their disengagement. Therefore, at times you can end up doing 10+ face-to-face meetings prior to them engaging in a course.” (Interview 8)

38 respondents commented that targets can make it difficult for services to provide a larger number of support sessions, which are required for service users with complex cases, or where clients have low skills and/or motivation. The need for 10 or more sessions was frequently cited as required to effectively support these clients.

![Figure 12: Skills, motivation and impact on resources required](image)

5.3.4 Theme eight: Peer support is an important resource and can be encouraged by considered project planning

The importance of peer support to NEETs was highlighted by 13 interviewees. Eight of whom said that peer support had been an unplanned but welcome outcome from training groups of people of mixed ages. With mixed age groups, older group members provided informal mentoring and support to younger members:
Mixed groups sometimes work quite well, and add to a sense of achievement for young people when they get certified, and then cheered on by older, more experienced participants.” (Interview 18)

A cautionary point was made by one interviewee, who warned that mixed age groups were not appropriate for all topics:

“If it’s woodwork or horticulture it’s good to mix. Less so if it’s personal development. That is not going to be a good mix with teenagers and 40 somethings.” (Interview 22)

Participants felt that if young people first heard about a programme in a peer group context (e.g. in a youth or sports club) that they had less fear about it. This is most likely because they had an opportunity to talk about it with peers or see peers reacting positively to it. For this reason, a number of services recommended holding information sessions in youth groups and other venues. Peer support in a group setting can also be an important bridge into one-to-one supports:

“Young people are more comfortable working in a group setting. With young men, conversations about personal barriers can be very challenging. Our goal is, through the group, to build a sense of trust, where they will then feel comfortable speaking one-to-one.” (Interview 28)

Service providers also actively encouraged peer support among the young people in their programmes. A number of organisations highlighted that having Facebook or WhatsApp groups complemented face-to-face group interactions and communication by enabling participants to keep in touch and provide each other with congratulations, information and advice. It was noted that celebrating the success of one young person in a messaging group could also serve as motivation for peers.

5.3.5 Theme nine: Training programmes should mirror the requirements of the workplace

Nine interviewees highlighted the need for their programmes to be more closely aligned to the ‘world of work’. This included topics, start times and the way in which courses drew from real work environments:

“You need to aim for 9.00 to 9.30 start time – they [programmes’] should adhere to the working world as much as possible. These young adults already have chaotic lives and pushing back times to suit them simply compounds this.” (Interview 7)

Extending this theme further, eight interviewees stated that formal work experience needed to be an integral part of all programmes, particularly for motivated young people who lack the necessary skills. To ensure young people are aware of the workplace focus and relevance of programmes, interviewees advised that the programme titles should be specific and, wherever possible, relate to specific jobs that interest young people.

Three interviewees stated that they initiated employer engagement through a series of low intensity
interventions (i.e. inviting guest speakers in), then progressed to more practical work experience, such as mentoring, apprenticeships and/or on the job training:

“Work experience such as barista training (which we find is particularly attractive to our young women) should be an integral part of all programmes – you have to make programmes as similar to the job market as possible. Ideally though, you first should organise a visit to a local Costa or Starbucks, so the young people can talk to or get an idea of the job from those doing it.” (Interview 1)

A cautionary point was made by one interviewee, who warned that rural based partnerships may face difficulties with maintaining links with local businesses due to their small client numbers.

One service had a different approach to creating real work experiences. This involved developing a social enterprise, where participants work while simultaneously gaining their Leaving Certificate or work based accreditation. Another interviewee, having established a training programme linked to major chains/retailers, highlighted the importance of ‘bespoke programmes’ tailored to the culture and skill set required by each business, as outlined in the spotlight below:

5.3.6 Theme ten: ‘No talk & chalk’: novel, unique ways of learning are needed to engage young people

22 interviewees stated that traditional teaching and learning methods were less effective than innovative action based teaching techniques. Some NEETs are convinced that traditional education is not suitable for them and have made this clear to service providers. Interviewees maintained that part of the challenge for many young people was the traditional teaching methods used in the mainstream secondary school system and that an alternative approach was needed:

“Walk away from talk and chalk, it’s economically more viable but it’s just not a runner, more activity based learning is appropriate, but it is more expensive.” (Interview 20)

Interviewees identified a range of approaches that can lead to more engaging training. The following were identified by two or more people:

- suitable tutors, with prior experience of teaching and working with NEETs;
- willingness to adapt to the differing learning styles preferred by learners;
- offering a curriculum that is flexible and has potential to be personalised;
- willingness for tutors to be equally as comfortable in youth centres and outreach settings, as they are in the classroom;
- a clear application to real-world work environments.

The previous points were deemed critical to the success of educational programmes. The point was also made that change was not always easy:
“We implemented a train-the-trainer level six programme to train existing staff on how to deliver education and training experientially and not academically. But, we found when staff delivered the programme, it wasn’t delivered experientially... despite training they reverted back to the norm, this is an idea that we’re still exploring.” (Interview 39)

Spotlight: Providing a bespoke programme for the retail outlet TK Maxx

On hearing that TK Maxx was establishing a local outlet, Westmeath Partnership set about planning, in partnership with the local TK Maxx branch, a training programme for TK Maxx customer service roles. Staff visited a nearby outlet, spoke with management, took photographs of the store and interviewed existing staff in order to ascertain the customer service style and skill set required by TK Maxx. Following this process staff found that a ‘friendly, outgoing customer service style’ and familiarity with the outlets POS (Point of Sale) system, visual merchandising and ‘up selling’ were deemed as particularly useful skills by current employees. These skills became specific modules within the course whose title was clearly identified with the outlet ‘TK Maxx Customer Service Skills’. There was no ‘guarantee’ of employment for participants after the course, as they had to undergo an interview. The service provider felt that this added to a ‘sense of achievement’ to the programme and created a ‘competitive atmosphere’ that would ‘spill-over’ during the eight week training. Older participants (over 24 years old) often provided informal supports to younger members. This approach was also informed by the TK Maxx preference for hiring staff of differing ages. Part of the training took place in the actual retail store, prior to the local outlet opening. The transport barrier was circumvented by the service liaising with management and requesting that all participants be rostered for the same four days so that car-pooling could be used. The service organised the community welfare officer to come and advise the class as to the number of hours they could work while maintaining current benefits. TK Maxx HR was kept informed of the hours for which participants were available. In return, the service requested that TK Maxx gave an interview to those that the programme specifically recommended. The Partnership also sent the CVs of programme participants to the central UK recruitment unit, who were supporting the hiring at the local office. The fact that no applicants were invited to interview through this avenue, highlighted the success of the tailored partnership approach, and showed that forming partnerships with local branches of large chains is effective in creating job opportunities. This programme resulted in 10 participants being hired by the local TK Maxx.

5.3.7 Theme eleven: Culturally appropriate supports increase minority groups engagement

Increasing the engagement of young people from marginalised communities was highlighted as an important element of the programme. Eight participants discussed this issue. The importance of tailoring programmes to meet the specific cultural needs and experiences of minority groups, such as Traveller, Roma, migrant groups, and young people with disabilities, was also noted.

Four organisations discussed their strategies for engaging young Travellers. In their view, the predictors of success were tutors with appropriate expertise and experience in working with marginalised groups. Finding topics that are interesting to young Travellers by consulting them in
relation to programme design was also a key factor. Ensuring that staff do not make assumptions about what training is suitable for different groups was considered important, as illustrated by the following quote:

“We set up a hair and beauty course for young Traveller women, in the hope that they would engage in computers later. We got it wrong though; make-up was ‘their area’ and they resented being taught their ‘expert’ subject; they reacted much better to IT tuition as it was entirely new.” (Interview 22)

Participants also discussed their approach to engaging young people with disabilities. One programme implementer developed a leadership programme and provided tailored one-to-one supports for people with disabilities. The importance of understanding the cultural relevance of the family in relation to minority groups was emphasised. Traveller and Syrian were two cultures named in relation to this point.

“Both, for disadvantaged local families and for Syrian refugees we have reached the whole community. You get the families in, then you’re more likely to get the young people in.” (Interview 36)

Two interviewees highlighted the usefulness of developing interagency groups, with representation from minority communities, to advise on the issues facing young people from minority communities and support the organisation to devise innovative solutions to engage them.

**Spotlight: Some culturally focused programmes have an 80-90% retention rate**

One SICAP service provider, knowing that young Travellers are not always easy to engage, strived to be culturally sensitive and developed a programme that responded to their specific interests. ‘We hired an older male Traveller to teach tin-smithing and wagon building to young Traveller men.’ Having successfully engaged the young men in practical learning courses, the staff were able to bring them into more challenging, but still culturally appropriate and interesting activities: ‘An interesting offshoot from this was that the tutor ended up doing another course, ‘oral histories,’ with the group. We think this worked because they felt it was appropriate to them and because they had enjoyed the practical, hands on workshops’. The staff were proud of the fact that they had successfully engaged young Traveller men: ‘our retention in that programme was very high. It was 80% - 90%’.

**5.3.8 Theme twelve: Complex cases or low skill/motivation individuals benefit from individualised follow-up**

Following up with clients post referral is a requirement of the SICAP programme. The way in which this is done varied across implementers, from monthly to six-monthly calls with all clients to more individualised client follow-up. Some services would make a call to all clients 12 months post ‘sign-up’ to the programme. Another approach is to set aside a few days each month for the team to contact all clients. A minority of services had no formal systems for follow-up and left this up to worker discretion. Simple systems were generally employed to support whatever process was in place, such as spread sheets and monitoring systems. As with other aspects of the programme, the approach taken was generally targeted to individual client needs, with complex cases and low skill/motivation individuals receiving more frequent and personalised follow up, and high skill/high
motivation individuals receiving more standardised supports, such as one scheduled phone call. A higher engagement approach is described below:

“If they disengage during the programme, we call and text several times. We would try to link-in with those who have disengaged a month afterwards to have a discussion as to what didn’t suit them. It’s important that it’s not seen as judgemental.” (Interview 6)

Follow up calls have a dual purpose. In the case of positive progression, they are used to explore whether barriers exist that may inhibit young people from continued attendance. In the case of referral to social services, it is useful to remind young people that SICAP services are there when they need them again. In the case of no progression, the aim is to support young people to capture learning and to help them to use this learning to inform their next steps:

“We have ongoing phone calls or emails with the youth, we need to follow through. We need to make sure they went to the interviews, did they get on the course? If they did, have they got any barriers to get there.” (Interview 30)

Some organisations would have a process at sign off to reconnect with the original referrers, the example below highlights a simple system with DSP:

“We have a very good referral system. We refer people back out to DSP for funding. We have had a form designed and the person’s details are on it. We tick off the form and send them back, [to say] whether the person showed up or not.” (Interview 36)

An example of collaboration in relation to feedback involved key workers within a youth services undertaking follow up on behalf of SICAP, as these workers were often more connected to the young people. The challenge of finding time and resources for making structured and consistent phone calls was noted by a small number of providers. Two interviewees stated that if more resources were available, more attention could be given to proactive engagement with young people who have disengaged. Whatever process was used, it was of key importance that young people felt that the service was not judgemental and that the door was always open for them to seek support.

5.3.9 Theme thirteen: Enterprise supports were considered inappropriate for the vast majority of NEETs and needed substantial investment and supports when appropriate

Six interviewees stated that they considered enterprise (e.g. ‘start your own business’) supports to be inappropriate for most young people engaging with their services. Interviewees felt that to be an effective entrepreneur, a range of high value skills and capacities are required, including although not limited to: self-motivation, resilience, complex conceptual thinking, and advanced organisational, communication, sales and finance skills. It was felt that for most young people, at the time of engaging with SICAP, these skills and capacities were not likely to be sufficiently developed. Interviewees also observed that to start a business, entrepreneurs generally used their networks and savings, things that young people often have not had time to build:
There is some concern about encouraging such a vulnerable group to ‘set up their own businesses’ when it takes some tenacity and resilience to do so.” (Interview 10)

The point was made that encouraging young people to start their own business could set unrealistic expectations and have negative outcomes as a result. However, one service had a fairly unique experience and view on this issue. Their project showed that with a substantial commitment of time and energy, enterprise supports could be made relevant to young people. Their experience indicated that this option was good for young people already engaged in informal economic commercial activity, or who were sceptical about their ability to work in a traditional setting but were motivated to work. This experience is outlined in the spotlight section below.

Spotlight: For the right group, and with significant time and resources, young people can progress from informal income generation into self-employment

Mayo North-East Partnership adopted an innovative approach to supporting young people into self-employment. The traditional ‘start your own business programme’ was modified to suit those younger people, who saw self-employment as the best option for them. Some young people were already engaged in making money in the informal economy, others found it challenging to work with authority figures. The course was about providing the skills to turn existing informal income generation into a formal business. The innovation in this approach is best explained in the interviewee’s own words: “We adapted our [usual] approach for supporting self-employment to the young people... Literacy was a huge issue and it took time for these young men to let us know they had difficulties filling in the necessary forms.

Our approach had to be quite different - more telephone contact, more support, more one-to-one sessions. NEETs need a different approach in relation to self-employment. You can’t provide run of the mill support. There are elements of running a business that aren’t common sense for young people. They don’t have the life experience of failed businesses, the tax system and accounts or working with authority.” The Back to Work Enterprise Allowance was noted by the interviewee as an extremely valuable scheme to support young people through this transition. It was also observed that self-employment programmes were found to be particularly relevant for young Traveller men who were engaged in some informal entrepreneurial activity and had a cultural understanding of self-employment. The outcomes from this targeted programme were notable - nine NEETs were involved in this programme and four of them progressed into self-employment.

5.4 Partnership working

5.4.1 Theme fourteen: Partnerships benefit from structure and maintenance

Every provider interviewed regarded partnership as a vital aspect of their model of service delivery. 18 people felt that their partnership with the Department of Social Protection (DSP) was positive. Interviewees commented that DSP pressure on young people to attend programmes encouraged attendance:
“DSP also has a huge part to play... the letters compelling them to attend, while controversial, are effective. We had up to forty at an information evening for the ‘Life Skills’ programme due to those letters.” (Interview 6)

Two interviewees commented that since Intreo was established, referrals into their service had improved significantly. However, appreciation for DSP’s role was not universal. In one region, Intreo had reduced their role in promoting attendance at open access events which impacted on attendance. In another region, Intreo was viewed as referring primarily to Seetec services:

“All of the DSP referrals are going directly to Seetec in the region. We should be getting direct referrals from DSP and we’re not.” (Interview 40)

Referrals from ETB and the community and voluntary sector were also key referral routes. Eight people commented that the success of these relationships was based on years of collaboration and staff relationships built over time. The most commonly named relationship attributes, required for positive interagency working were: trust, mutual benefit, humility and a shared purpose, as highlighted below:

“Positive individual relationships need to be the lynchpin... Trust in your professionalism is key - there needs to be mutual benefit. ETB for example has courses to fill but do not have the ability to fill them.” (Interview 11)

The following structural elements were consistently regarded as effective in creating good interagency working:

- agreement on what each service does and how duplication can be avoided;
- clearly identified communal objectives;
- adherence to ‘a case management’ or other collaborative approach to the work;
- regular occasions for formal review of the partnership and its outcomes.

While not all respondents agreed that a formal MoU was necessary for positive relationships, others felt that having a written agreement helped bring gravity and attention to the relationship and what it meant for all partners.

Reducing duplication brought the most challenges and no interviewees had been able to achieve this within their local area. The main reason was that, increasingly, services were being asked by funders to work with NEETs. Since it is challenging to connect with this client group, it can generate competition for clients:

“There is huge duplication... there are other competing services. Traveller services, YMCA, Youthreach, CDP, and now sport groups are being challenged to work with NEETs... We need to create a clear understanding of what is an appropriate service.” (Interview 29)

Another challenge for some PIs is restrictions on their ability to outsource some services to partner organisations, who are considered ‘experts’. The point was made that in the past, partnership also involved a formal purchase of services, however, this has been restricted by the current contracting arrangements.

The last factor considered to be key in creating positive interagency working was facilitating networking or sharing events between multiple services. Many services used existing fora for this

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30 Seetec Employment and Skills Ireland are one of the preferred tenderers for JobPath.
purpose, ensuring that SICAP work was included on the agenda. Other services had established new events to support interagency working:

“We have started in the last 12 months to bring CEOs and staff from different partnerships together. All the project managers meet to discuss innovations and improving as services. The focus of our conversations is to review how to deliver a quality service.” (Interview 32)

The spotlight below outlines an innovative approach undertaken in relation to partnership working:

**Spotlight: A unique approach to partnership**

Paul Partnership, based in Limerick City, has a long history of working in partnership with multiple providers. They took an innovative approach to the delivery of SICAP: ‘We delivered our programme with nine other small partnership groups. We can, together with the other nine agencies, access the most hard to reach young people and adults.’ This method was a reflection of the organisation’s belief, developed through years of community development work, that organisations which are embedded in the community will have the best access to the most excluded people and, therefore, the most impact. This approach took substantial time to set-up and manage. A positive working relationship with the partners was achieved initially through a series of meetings to agree the collective approach. These discussions and subsequent review and planning meetings were built on the understanding that positive interagency relationships needed to be built, and that this could only be founded on mutual respect. This meant being clear about how each organisation could add value to the partnership.

In this service delivery arrangement: ‘we were all equal partners, this was a collective relationship... We think our partnership model is an example of good practice as the local community groups are closest to the local communities. We are in the city centre, whereas these local community groups are located in the places where people who need them are. Some of the staff live and work in the same area, therefore, there is a really genuine connection to the community’. Overall, this approach was considered to be one where a focused application of the principles of community development yielded significant returns in relation to the number of hard to reach young people who were engaged and maintained in the programme.

5.4.2 Theme fifteen: Engaging with schools can be useful for early intervention

Secondary schools can play an important role in identifying potential NEETs. 17 interviewees made reference to secondary schools being on the ‘front-line’ and that young people’s decisions, conscious or unconscious, about their future are heavily influenced by the school system. Three interviewees commented on the need for schools to provide impartial and accurate career guidance to young adults. Two areas were identified where schools frequently lacked appropriate knowledge: requirements needed to gain entry to trades and the limitations of the Applied Leaving Certificate in relation to entering certain training:
Apprenticeship misinformation is an issue; secondary school information to young adults is very poor and we are often the ones that have to ‘burst the bubble’. For example, foundation maths is often not good enough to gain an electrician apprenticeship.” (Interview 23)

Ten interviewees felt that SICAP targets had compromised their ability to reach young people in secondary school, as these interventions were not counted, unless the young person registered with SICAP in that year. However, some providers are continuing to engage with secondary schools:

“In 2015, we did an intensive intervention for half a dozen ‘at risk’ young people as identified by secondary school teachers. Qualified specialised guidance councillors were hired (at quite a high cost) to link in with these clients several times a year. However, I am acutely aware that such interventions cannot be recorded under SICAP.” (Interview 7)

The spotlight below outlines how innovation engagement with the school system has the potential to respond to the needs of the most at risk young people.

**Spotlight: Reach out to young people before their NEET status becomes entrenched**

Prior to SICAP, Waterford Partnership ran a programme in conjunction with a local community school. There were a number of early school leavers attending this programme. The School Liaison Officer came to the Partnership and explained that there were eight young people that wanted to undertake the Applied Leaving Certificate option, but required outside intensive support. ‘We funded this programme for years; some schools didn’t like us providing this programme, but on the other hand they couldn’t provide one-to-one support that such individuals required. This programme continues to provide at-risk young people / early school leavers with support to complete their Leaving Certificate - about 70 or 80 young people partake each year and our success rate is 95%’.

5.5 Organisational development

5.5.1 Theme sixteen: The physical environment is important in optimising youth engagement

12 interviewees spoke about the need to make the physical environment more youth friendly in order to optimise engagement. Providing a youth-friendly atmosphere, working with partners who provide youth-friendly environments, and providing off-site services e.g. satellite services and outreach appointments, were identified as the most common ways of ensuring appropriate environments:

“The environment needs to lend itself to being welcoming to these young people... [our] office espouses this, there’s a pool table and a cup of tea etc.” (Interview 4)

Libraries and cafes were viewed as good options in situations when young people-friendly community services were not available. It was also noted that bringing people into new environments could aid the core work:
“Taking them [young people] out of their local area to complete their course can be very effective, it can remind them that there is a world outside their own community.”

(Interview14)

Having community and youth friendly spaces available was viewed as being part of providers’ community development approach. It was highlighted that in many cases, achieving a youth/community friendly environment can take time, and is a longer term investment. An example of this approach is described in the spotlight below.

Spotlight: Creating community friendly spaces

Laois Partnership Company spoke about how creating community friendly spaces is a long-term commitment. To provide healthy, positive and community accessible facilities, the organisation invests in space working together with providers and the community to access funds and gain community support. ‘In one of the estates we are based in, there was a training centre belonging to the HSE and they sold it to the council five years ago. Our service manager approached the county manager and asked for use of the community centre. We got a Leader grant, took over the building and refurbished it. People know the building. The first thing we did is ‘open the gates to the community’ and it has never been vandalised. People own it. They have the hanging baskets they made in the centre lining the streets’.

5.5.2 Theme seventeen: Systems and supports are required to effectively manage data (IRIS)

Services that have been using IT systems as part of their core work, prior to the introduction of IRIS, reported the transition easier than services for whom this presented a change from paperwork to IRIS. Like many aspects of the SICAP programme, there are various implementation methods used by services to support collection of data in IRIS. In the majority of cases, workers complete their own records in IRIS, in a minority of instances a central administrator completed all data entry on behalf of client facing team members. A number of interviewees commented that transitioning onto IRIS fully, to the point where staff were confident and consistent in system use, had taken over 12 months.

“The system can be tedious – the need for paper files means that you are often ‘reporting’ twice, but all staff have accepted for some time now that it is a feature of their work as long as the project is in receipt of exchequer funding.” (Interview 7)

Factors considered useful in supporting a transition from paper files to IRIS, include:

- having a named person responsible for supporting staff in using IRIS;
- undertaking quality audits to assist staff to understand data input standards and develop strategies for improvement where required;
- ensuring staff understand that data collection is core to their work rather than an addition to it;
- having at least two people on the team with the skills to support other team members in the use of IRIS and ensuring that staff attend all Pobal IRIS training;

31 IRIS is the central database used by Pobal.
• merging pre-existing forms with Pobal requirements i.e. consent forms;
• integrating information on use of IRIS into staff performance reviews.

A named benefit of the system was that IRIS provides a clear snap shot as to how many people have been supported by the programme and what services they have received. Another provider spoke about using the data on IRIS to manage quality and check that ‘no young people had fallen through the gaps’.

Good practice in relation to managing the challenges of collecting data from young people was that this should be done fairly quickly, so that the targeted work can be started with the young people. Or alternatively, for more high risk young people, that it was not done until a more stable relationship between the young person and the worker had been established. Eight service providers specifically noted the importance of putting forms and paperwork aside, for as long as needed, in order not to overwhelm the young person:

“Formal needs assessment does not work... you have to fill it out over time and eventually have enough information to put it up on IRIS. You do it slowly and build up trust. We don’t pull out the paper work and the folder before we know them.” (Interview 36)

There were also challenges highlighted in relation to the use of IRIS, such as the lack of a unified record for clients in IRIS, which connects all the information held by the service on the client to their file, and no system to support group emails. Two services were either using a Salesforce CRM system or were considering it. They stated that an internal IT system can meet other programme needs in relation to data management. A comment was made that system administration would be easier if integration between CRM systems was supported at a policy level:

“The first 12 months of IRIS was extremely difficult – but it’s generally much improved. We are in the process of looking into Salesforce, as IRIS is great for Pobal but less useful for organisations. Cross correlation across different individuals cannot be tracked [in IRIS].” (Interview 1)

5.5.3 Theme eighteen: Staff training and support is important in maintaining the diverse skill sets required and team morale

20 interviewees highlighted the importance of ongoing training for staff working with young people. A career guidance qualification was deemed particularly useful, with eight interviewees expressing a desire for staff training on the development of personalised career plans. Some programme implementers are using assessment tools, such as Richter Scale®32, however for most, formalised training is on the wish list:

“A formal career guidance qualification would be really useful for my front-line workers. We could provide a quality guidance model... it would be a real bonus to have a dually qualified community / career guidance worker.” (Interview 18)

32 https://www.goalsuk.org/
Five interviewees felt that mentoring/life coaching can help motivate young people to recognise their personal strengths and break-out of old patterns of thinking. Two interviewees had provided this training for their staff with positive outcomes. A counselling background was deemed advantageous by two interviewees, however, the challenge for counsellors being able to step into other professional spheres, such as community work, was also noted. In order to address the motivational issues of young people, three interviewees felt that training their advisers in motivational interviewing techniques could improve outcomes. Maintaining accurate and secure records in the database on a day to day basis by caseload, tracking accurate data input, and running data reports has proved difficult for some staff. The ever-increasing IT skills required for website maintenance, Facebook posts, and other social digital strategies have also been a challenge, which could be addressed through increased training. Additional training needs mentioned were: research and evaluation / outcome reporting, advice and guidance skills, and management skills. Other factors important in ensuring staff were supported appropriately, included:

- opportunities for staff to meet as a team to discuss workplace strategies and reflect on their approach to the work;
- supportive management through informal and formal supports, i.e. supervision;
- opportunities for staff to meet with colleagues in partner agencies to discuss co-ordinated workplace strategies;
- flexibility for staff to determine their work approach.

5.6 Summary

Programme implementers identified a number of strategies for encouraging young people to avail of SICAP services and maintain active participation in the service. A common characteristic across these approaches was making each step as tailored to the individual young person as possible. Another essential component was building authentic relationships with young people. This was best achieved through a coaching / mentoring approach, which was particularly important for youth with complex needs. Once a relationship was established, service providers were able to identity and address individual barriers to participation, such as lack of transportation or childcare. Regular tailored follow up was another part of this relationship. The main challenge in applying good practice was that young people with complex needs, or with lower motivation levels, required more staff time. This presented challenges in a target driven environment. The factors that supported the building of productive interagency relationships included creating structures, agreeing common objectives and working practices, recording these formally and ensuring consistent communication as well as ensuring a reduction in the duplication of services.
6 The perspective of young people (NEETs)

6.1 Introduction
This chapter outlines key themes identified from interviews with 41 young people, who accessed SICAP services in 2015 and 2016. Interviews explored their interaction with the service as well as their views on the service as a whole. Interviewees were randomly selected from the six case study sites, and had to agree to be involved in the research. As discussed in the methodology chapter, this process introduces the potential for bias in the information received. This arises because young people with certain characteristics, such as having had a negative experience of the service, for instance, may have self-selected not to be involved.

6.2 Demographic overview – NEETs involved in the interviews
The sample of interviewees was representative of the whole population from which they were drawn. The age range of young people interviewed ranged from 18 (youngest) to 26 (oldest) with an average age of just over 21. This is similar to the average age of, nearly, 21 for all NEETs supported under SICAP. Interviewees were availing of SICAP supports with varied frequency. The two most common groups were those who attended 2-3 times (14 people) and those who attended 10+ times (11 people), with everyone else falling between these poles. Level of educational attainment was also comparable to whole population from which interviewees were selected.

Just under 20% of interviewees had children. 7% of interviewees reported having a disability, which is the same as the total NEET population supported under SICAP.

Once registered with the service, participants availed of a range of supports offered by the SICAP service provider. This was also representative of the population from which they were selected. The majority, 20 participants, said that they took part in education and training activities, which included a broad variety of courses including: beauty therapy, construction, payroll, childcare, first aid and food preparation. 14 participants said that they received advice and personal planning while at the service. 12 participants reported that they had received help with preparing their CV, while seven said that they were coached on interview skills. There were six participants who received help in searching for jobs online, while four received advice on setting up their own business.

6.3 Engaging NEETs

6.3.1 Theme one: Young people hear about the service through referral and word of mouth
Nearly half of those interviewed stated that they heard of the partnership through a referral from DSP (19 out of 41). Ten participants were referred from another service. Nine participants heard of the partnership through word of mouth, including from their family members. Two participants had heard of the partnership through staff presentations in another service they attended. Only one participant had heard about the partnership via an online search, citing Citizens Information as the site. No participants cited posters or social media as a way of hearing about the service. Wider advertisement was a recommendation from one interviewee:
“I can’t see how they could improve, what they are doing now is perfect. Maybe if they put a notice in the social welfare office advertising their services. I wouldn’t have known about it, only for my sister. Advertise better is the only advice I could give, they are welcoming and prompt in reply. If young people know what the company does, they would use it more.” (Interview 27)

Participants were asked why they wanted to avail of the SICAP services. The most common reason, cited by just under half of the group (19 young people), was that they wanted help in finding employment. 15 participants wanted help returning to education or finding a training course. Five participants said they ‘were made’ to attend the service by DSP and four participants attended because they wanted information on how to set up their own business. Previous good experience with the service was the main reason for attending the service for another two participants.

6.3.2 Theme two: SICAP programmes are successful at managing diverse expectations and supporting greater clarity on next steps for young people

Young people came to SICAP supports with a diverse expectations and self-identified needs, for example:

- 20 participants stated they knew they wanted advice on education / training from the service on arriving at their first appointment.
- 18 participants said they were clear on arrival that they wanted employment. Within this group there were those who knew what type of work they wanted and those who did not have a specific job in mind and just wanted to find work.
- Four participants wanted information on setting up their own business.
- Seven of the participants interviewed said they did not know what they wanted to get from the service when they arrived, as described in the quote below:

“I was never one of those that ‘knew what they wanted to do’. My school was good but all the focus was on getting good points.” (Interview 28)

Participants were also asked whether or not the service helped them ‘figure out’ what they wanted in relation to career or education. 20 interviewees agreed that the service helped them clarify their options for the future and seven stated that it did not. The group that did not attain this clarity was mostly comprised of young people who came to the service looking for assistance with education and training, and who did not find an appropriate match.

“No, they gave me a list of courses that they had on, but none of them ‘jumped out at me’ – didn’t like any of them, so did not see the point.” (Interview 23)

A further eight participants felt that the service helped them somewhat figure out their plans. Some of these participants mentioned that while they did not fully understand what they wanted to do next, the help of the service meant they could definitively rule out things that they did not want to do, which they found useful in itself.

The above demonstrates that SICAP providers deliver services to a diverse group of young people, from those who have a defined and clear career path, to those who do not know what they want to do. The positive feedback received from young people suggests that SICAP services are well equipped to support young people with diverse range of needs and expectations.

33 These add to more than 42, as some interviewees provided multiple answers.
### 6.3.3 Theme three: Prior to linking with services young people are actively looking for work

As part of the interview, interviewees were asked about their activities in relation to work and education prior to engaging with SICAP. Around half of the group (20 participants) had been actively handing out CVs prior to engaging with the service. A further seven said they had been applying for jobs online. This quote below is representative of the majority of those interviewed, many of whom attended SICAP programmes out of sense of frustration:

“I was trying to get into full time employment, I was sending out load of CV’s, but there are not many jobs in this area, especially in what I am qualified in (Sports and fitness management), so I was trying to apply for retail positions.” *(Interview 31)*

Eight participants were in education/training while attending the service, and only two of the forty-two participants reported not taking any steps in relation to seeking employment or training opportunities prior to attending the service. This data indicates that young people are willing to work and are actively looking for work or education. Many of those interviewed stated that they would be willing to take up work in areas that were not directly related to their areas of interest.

### 6.4 Working with NEETs

#### 6.4.1 Theme four: The service is largely meeting the expectations of service users

Arguably, one of the most important questions asked in this research is whether the service is meeting the expectations of young people. The interviews with young people showed that the SICAP services were meeting their needs on a number of different criteria. When asked about the most helpful aspect of the service, 15 participants pointed to the information given on career progression, five participants indicated the assistance with their CV and four participants mentioned the interview skills course. A further two participants named funding for further training and another two mentioned information on becoming self-employed. Over a third of service users said that their confidence had been enhanced as a result of receiving these services:

“The Interviews skills course demonstrated what I would be asked in a real-life situation and helped me to think quicker when in that position. It made me feel more confident.” *(Interview 2)*

Young people overwhelmingly found staff to be friendly and approachable across the various services. Furthermore, numerous interviewees noted that while they were receiving this support, they did not feel in any way judged by the service for seeking support, or made to feel ‘stupid’ in any way, as illustrated below:

“They ran through the information and did not rush it, I am not really good with books so sometimes I didn’t understand what they meant but they would rephrase answers so that I understood.” *(Interview 27)*

The analysis of interviews with young people suggests that the vast majority of participants are very happy with the level of service they received.

- 24 participants, all who answered this question, said there was nothing they would describe as ‘not good’.
- 29 participants, all who answered this questions stated that any support they needed from the service was provided.
Four out of five service users had progressed in education/work since receiving the support: 19 into education and training and 11 into employment. Only eight participants considered themselves to have not progressed since engaging with the service. 11 participants said that the supports received were at least partly responsible for their progression, while 12 participants said that supports were solely responsible for their progression, as represented in the quotes below:

“Yeah, they helped me a lot in getting the job. I applied for it myself but I knew what to expect in the interview because of the interview training that the company gave me.” (Interview 33)

“I wouldn’t have gone on the course without the Partnership as I would not have known that it existed or how to get in touch with the college.” (Interview 20)

6.4.2 Theme five: Having the same worker who goes the extra mile is noticed and appreciated

One of the strongest themes that emerged from the interviews was that young people felt that the staff, in particular their assigned worker, had positively impacted them. The vast majority, 29 of the 42 young people interviewed, felt that the staff member had gone above and beyond their role to help them. The meaning of ‘above and beyond’ was different for each person. Some people noted that following up with them and ensuring they were managing in their new job/training course or showing genuine patience, was core to staff members ‘going the extra mile’. The following quote highlights this sentiment:

“They couldn’t have done more. They rang up to check on me, they do follow up to see if they could do anymore, they are still ringing me up to see how I am getting on in my current course.” (Interview 4)

The sense that the staff are making an extra effort for service users was reflected in the general atmosphere of the interviews throughout. One participant noted that the staff attitude and engagement had fostered a sense of wanting to give back to the community, as a result of the support they had received:

“We did up the hall in which we do our course to make it and the town look better. The hall that we use has not been used in a long time and we are hoping that fixing it up will attract people back into using it.” (Interview 41)

6.4.3 Theme six: Staff listening to service users and caring about their plans is important

Participants remembered and were appreciative of staff listening to their concerns. 30 participants stated that they felt staff cared about their plans with further two saying they felt that staff somewhat cared. Only one person felt that staff did not care about their plans. Remaining participants did not answer this question. Young people stated that good staff communication was crucial and contributed significantly to their feeling that staff had their best interests at heart:

“Yeah definitely, it didn’t feel like they were just there to do a job. It felt like they were there to help me moving forward, they communicated that very well.” (Interview 29)

Participants were also asked what they felt was most memorable from their interactions with the service. Young people noted that they felt they were prioritised by the service and the service took their individual circumstances into account:
“They took my kids into consideration, they got courses that could work around the twins, like courses in the evenings, part time courses or courses I could do from home. They took my circumstances into account when trying to match me with a course.” (Interview 12)

“The last few weeks, with my sister committing suicide, has been tough but they were awesome, the support has been great. I don’t think you would get that from a big company, they treat you like family.” (Interview 38)

6.4.4 Theme seven: Mental health problems are an issue within the group, although are often left unspoken

During the interview, young people were asked about whether they had suffered mental distress, depression or anxiety in recent times. For many, mental health was a challenge, considered to be related to unemployment. Eight participants, nearly one in five, reported suffering from recent anxiety or depression. Significantly, the majority of those who reported anxiety or depression did not mention this to their worker in the SICAP programme, as they did not think there would be any support available. As a result, the majority of these participants said that while the service may have been supportive, they were not offered any help to deal with these issues as the service was not made aware of their challenges. This is illustrated below:

“I have felt depressed, anxious and stressed, mainly as I am finding it hard to find a job. They didn’t offer me any supports, but I didn’t really tell them that that was how I was feeling.” (Interview 5)

A much larger group, 16 participants reported that they had suffered from stress as a result of recent unemployment. While not reporting depression or anxiety, there was a sense from these young people that, if unaddressed, feelings of psychological distress had the potential to become even more of an issue for them if they remained NEET. Only one young person had been offered any mental health supports:

“Yeah, I was stressed; they offered me courses in life coaching to try to deal with it.” (Interview 7)

Only 15 participants reported no mental health difficulties or stress as a result of being unemployed or out of training or education. Cumulatively, just under two thirds of those interviewed reported either stress or more serious mental health problems, making this a very common issue in this group. It appears that most participants believe that it is not within the remit of the SICAP provider to support them in managing mental health challenges and, therefore, do not raise this as an issue with the worker. One service user in particular urged services to ask service users how they are coping with unemployment:

“Ask young people how they are feeling because they are unemployed, that would have helped me when I was depressed and offer them supports to deal with depression if they can do so.” (Interview 4)

6.4.5 Theme eight: Follow up, tailor supports and ensure ownership of goals

The analysis of interviews showed the need for staff to encourage young people not just in their initial search for a job or training course, but along their journey in the new direction. Over half of participants, 24 young people, stated that the service followed up with them through one or more
phone calls after they had moved on. Ten participants reported that they had not received follow up calls from the service. Interviewees felt that follow up was important as plans were not always successful and young people may need supports to change direction:

“If anything, tell them to try absolutely everything and to shine a light into where they want to go. Let them know that it is not the end of the world if the first option fails, encourage them to try different courses so that they might be able to find what is the correct path for themselves.” (Interview 3)

According to young people another key to successful service was for staff to help them explore their own ambitions and match opportunities to their personal interests. Interviewees felt it was extremely important that they were not discouraged from particular jobs or to pursue a more ‘realistic’ career path:

“They really listened and pushed me to go onto the course instead of working in a shop, rather than retail work they pushed me to do more and look at working towards getting a career in a job where you can make a good wage. Their encouragement really meant a lot.” (Interview 29)

“Encouragement – even if plan is a bit ‘far-fetched’ don’t shoot people down – just be sure that there’s a Plan B.” (Interview 36)

Young people were asked if they felt that the service was tailored to meet their needs. The vast majority, 30 people, felt it was a tailored service, with only four saying it was not. The term tailored meant different things to different people. For some young people, this meant keeping information very straightforward, while for others, it meant supporting them during difficult circumstances. One young person, who felt it was not tailored, described how they were directed into an area in which they had no interest. Another individual felt that due to their being the only young person in the service with a disability, the service could not meet their needs. Another participant felt that they were being forced into an internship that they did not want to do:

“The course that they sent me on in food safety, I didn’t have any interest in. They shouldn’t send people on courses that they are not interested in. I only did it so that I would have something on my CV.” (Interview 4)

6.5 Summary

The majority of young people stated that they had been actively seeking employment and found this process very discouraging. Within this context the supports received from SICAP were welcomed. According to youth, involving young people in programme planning and goal setting as well as developing strong relationships are key to good practice. They appreciated that staff went ‘above and beyond’ and showed genuine care and concern for their progress and well-being. Staff authenticity was noted by the majority of young people, who saw the approach as unique compared to other services. Despite good relationships with staff, young people did not feel comfortable seeking support for mental health issues. This reluctance to discuss mental health was due to participants’ perception that it was outside the scope of workers to respond to or support young people around these issues.

34 It should be noted that this data has not been cross referenced against their time in the service, for some youth, they may be scheduled for follow up calls, for example within six months of their last interaction.
7 The perspective of programme partners

7.1 Introduction

This chapter explores good practice from the perspective of partner organisations working with SICAP services in Cork City, Laois, Donegal, South Tipperary, and Wexford. Interviews, undertaken with 13 service providers via the phone, explored providers' experience of working in partnership with SICAP programme implementers.

7.2 Engaging NEETs

7.2.1 Theme one: Programme Implementers have an excellent ability to engage at-risk people, including NEETs

Nearly all participants held PIs in high regard due to their success in working with the most hard to reach individuals, including NEETs. Four participants stated that staff possess strong knowledge about working with young people who are NEET:

“I think (SICAP) have their finger on the pulse of the needs of NEETs and what's happening in the broader community. The staff have a community, youth or social services background, and I think this is critical.” (Interview 11)

Four interviewees stated that working with PIs was beneficial to their service as they had a unique approach in relation to engaging new youth and then maintaining this engagement. This was seen as being primarily due to the individualisation of their approach and their connection to the local community. A further two respondents pointed out that the location of PI staff within communities was of benefit:

“They go out and develop relationships, get people together, bring them together. I think it's that they go knock on doors, they're involved with local communities. They really touch base with these young people.” (Interview 1)

In only one case, a project partner commented that the service had not worked effectively with the local community. This was in relation to research into local needs of young people, where the researcher did not have appropriate knowledge or experience of the target groups, which affected relevance of findings. This point highlights the importance of staff being familiar with and experienced in the area of community development. This point was made by the majority of interviewees who saw the community development approach of SICAP services as key to their success.

7.3 Partnership working

7.3.1 Theme two: Both formal and informal processes are useful for creating and maintaining effective working partnerships

There was unanimous agreement that partnership approaches could result in greater efficiency and effectiveness, if well managed. Interviewees reported three factors that are useful in building and maintaining strong partnerships between local service providers working with NEETs:

- establishing committees with a strategic and planning focus to oversee partnerships and/or including NEETs on the agenda of existing committees;
• formal review meetings between senior staff;
• informal and ongoing communication between frontline staff.

“We have pre, during and post meetings for all programmes. We review outcomes of the programme together. Monitoring and evaluation together is big.” (Interview 2)

Six participants reported that establishing a working group/committee with a strategic focus was useful for clarifying roles. Having clear and agreed objectives and working methodologies was also key. Senior management was generally part of this process with the majority of planning occurring at the project set-up stage. A small number of participants noted that a formal Memorandum of Understanding is useful to ensure clarity and avoid duplication of services. Two participants also highlighted that informal and ongoing communications, which hinged on timely responses to queries, helped local services respond quickly to the challenges experienced by young people.

7.3.2 Theme three: Co-delivering services helps achieve mutual objectives and share administrative and resource costs

Three participants pointed out that co-delivering services with PIs was useful as it helps them achieve common objectives. In addition, two project partners explained that this approach helps to distribute the financial, administrative and resource costs associated with delivering a programme or course, as highlighted in the following comments:

“There’s a huge amount of trust and we understand that both organisations can work together with NEETs to achieve common goals for both organisations.” (Interview 12)

“We put together a modular programme to target young people. The partnership was the first agency to come together to fund a particular module - they couldn’t offer funding [for] the entire programme, but they recognised that it met their own goals and matched their objectives.” (Interview 11)

7.4 Summary

Overall, partner organisations found that PIs were effective at building partnerships and had a strong knowledge of local communities and service providers. The basis for this effective interagency working was founded on common objectives and an agreed working methodology as well as the mutual desire to reduce duplication and increase efficiency. This was all possible when time was allowed to develop positive working relationships based on trust in each other’s work, both at the strategic and frontline levels. A combination of formal and informal processes was vital for building and maintaining effective partnerships. Nearly all participants agreed that a benefit of the collaboration with PIs was the considerable knowledge and unique skills that SICAP staff could bring to engaging and maintaining engagement with NEETs. SICAP programme staff had a practical approach for engaging young people, demonstrated through their knowledge of the local community and approach to community development.
8 Good practice recommendations

8.1 Introduction

The research identified **19 good practice recommendations**. These are described under four categories:

1) Engaging young people
2) Working with young people
3) Partnership working
4) Organisational development

8.2 Engaging young people

8.2.1 Community outreach is far more effective than social media or posters

Actively asking existing clients and community members, who use other parts of the service, to encourage young NEETs they know to come in, is one of the most effective methods of engaging young people. Positive word of mouth increases engagement, as does directly meeting young people where they spend time. Young people confirmed this point - one in five heard of the support service through word of mouth, including from their family members.

8.2.2 Social media is better at keeping young people engaged rather than initially getting them engaged

Social media, such as Whatsapp, is useful for keeping young people connected to each other after they have participated in a group together. However, social media was generally regarded as not very useful engagement tool and did not bring young people into programmes. Posters and adverts in local papers were also considered ineffective for increasing local people’s knowledge about supports on offer. When asked, none of the 42 young people said that they had heard about the service through either posters or social media.

8.2.3 Co-creating taster and short engagement programmes with young people is essential in accessing the hardest to reach

To engage the hardest to reach young people, it is important to make initial engagement with the programme as attractive and accessible as possible. Providing programmes that are interesting to young people is key. The best way to determine what interests young people and what courses service providers should offer, is to ask young people. This was generally done through either group or one-to-one engagement. Creating accessible entry points for the hardest to reach young people is assisted by:

- Understanding the interests of young people the service is looking to engage.
- Providing short or taster courses based on young people’s interests. These can be provided in partnership with other youth and community organisations. Courses that have worked for other providers include: kickboxing, beauty and health, music, skateboarding, video gaming and mindfulness.
- Ensuring that short taster courses provide meaningful opportunities and clear pathways into other SICAP supports.
8.2.4 Providers need to understand transport and childcare challenges and play a role in resolving these

Most young people do not have their own transport, which coupled with a lack of suitable public transport, is a challenge, particularly in rural areas. Identifying transport and childcare barriers that can prevent young people from engaging or progressing, and then addressing these is crucial to young people’s sustained engagement. This can be achieved by:

- Changing the start times of programmes to align with public transport times.
- Bringing services to the location of clients. Satellite clinics are very effective for supporting initial engagement with services. Providing training locally can help young people attend courses that they would not have access to otherwise.
- Having a fund for public transport and a clear and simple application process can provide young people with a big impact support at a small cost.

8.3 Working with young people

8.3.1 Coaching is effective when working with young people with lower motivation

A coaching/mentoring approach was considered by service providers to be key to working with NEETs, especially those with lower motivation and/or skills. This approach consists of staff using coaching methodologies to:

- support young people to clarify their feelings and goals;
- plan steps to achieve their goals; and
- challenge ineffective thinking or incorrect assumptions throughout this process.

In order to do this well, staff need to have well-honed skills in order to appropriately challenge unhelpful thinking and unrealistic assumptions and/or expectations held by youth. Young people felt that a non-judgemental approach was key to this, as was support to identify their own path. Directing young people into areas they were not interested did not facilitate positive outcomes. Training in coaching for staff had been used effectively by a small number of service providers and has been indicted by others as a required training for the future. The use of a coaching/mentoring approach demands more staff time than simply referral or signposting. Output targets were commonly noted as a barrier to utilisation of a coaching and mentoring approach.

8.3.2 Time and skills are required to support young people to manage life challenges

A significant proportion of young people using SICAP services have a range of additional needs, including housing, health, mental health, substance use and family difficulties. These issues, if unaddressed, may prevent them from accessing, or from continuing to engage in education and employment supports. Staff need to be resourced, trained and empowered to provide wraparound supports to NEETs, including having time to build relationships. Other good practice includes:

- Paperwork and assessments should be done non-invasively and over-time.
- Personal authenticity, patience, fairness, empathy and a solution focused approach are all key attributes that staff need to have or develop.
- For complex cases, staff may need 10+ sessions with the young person to make the engagement effective.
- Follow up to referrals is an essential aspect of support work.
8.3.3 Mental health is an issue for young people and is often left unspoken

Reflecting findings in the literature review, nearly one in five participants reported suffering from recent anxiety or depression, with two thirds of the group reporting some form of mental stress as a result of being unemployed. However, this was seldom spoken about, as young people did not see SICAP providers as having any role in assisting them to access supports. Counter to this, the vast majority of providers saw lifestyle factors as issues that should be resolved through well-thought-out and monitored referrals. A more considered approach to screening for mental health issues is needed as well as clarity on progression routes and supports for young people who require these.

8.3.4 A proportion of NEETs require ‘hand-holding’ and an individualised range of supports

‘Hand-holding’ is an effective approach for some young NEETs, particularly those with complex needs or low skills/motivation. Service providers called the following activities hand-holding:

- Calling young people to get them out of bed in the morning and up for class.
- Calling around to them if they have dropped out of a group.
- Supporting them to make appointments, and on occasion attending appointments with them.

The view of service providers was mirrored by young people. The majority of young people believed that the staff member working with them, had gone above and beyond their role to help them and that this was useful. Service providers also considered handholding to be a way of renewing young people’s faith in themselves by showing, through action rather than words, that they are important and valued. However, this approach takes significant amount of time. Planning and resource allocation, at both the service provider and funder level, need to focus on ensuring that frontline staff have flexibility and time to provide appropriate client focused supports.

8.3.5 Creating an environment that encourages peer support

Peer support is an important resource which can be encouraged by thoughtful programme planning. The following are examples of how this can be supported:

- Running skill-based groups with participants of different ages, which can create an environment where older people provide peer support to younger people.
- For hard to engage NEETs, a peer group programme can be a stepping stone to what can be more challenging one-to-one work.
- Social media message groups can complement face-to-face group dynamics and increase peer support after or during group programmes.

8.3.6 Training should be informed by and reflective of the workplace

Workplace training programmes are more interesting and relevant to young people, if these are structured to reflect elements of the real work environment as closely as possible. Recommendations for achieving this are:

- Make formal work experience an integral part of all programmes, particularly for those who are motivated but lack the necessary skills.
- Ensure young people are aware of the workplace focus and relevance of programmes. Some interviewees advised that the programme titles should be specific and, if possible, relate to specific jobs that interest young people.
Bring people into the programme from the workplace to talk about what it is like to work in specific work environments.
Include work placements and work trials.

8.3.7 ‘No talk & chalk’: novel ways of learning are needed

Many NEETs have had somewhat negative experiences of school. This means that community education and workplace placements should differ from the school environment. This requires an action based rather than classroom style of learning and exploring different teaching techniques. The following assisted providers to rethink the learning environment:

- Hire tutors that have experience with the NEET cohort and can deliver learning in outreach and non-classroom settings.
- Hire tutors who have had a differing career and qualifications prior to embarking on a youth/social care/community work as they can bring a ‘real world’ perspective to teaching i.e. utilising a trained chef to provide cooking workshops.
- Encourage current tutors to compose modules/programmes that intersperse off-site and innovative learning techniques.

8.3.8 Programming should be informed by cultural needs of minority groups

Young people from minority groups are more likely to experience additional barriers than their peers. It is important to consider the culture of young people to ensure programmes are designed to be inclusive. Ways to do this include:

- Providing culturally appropriate supports for a variety of groups, including Travellers and people from other ethnic minority groups.
- Not making presumptions about the needs of young people from those groups, but consulting with them to understand what they want.
- Ensuring that tutors understand the needs of young people from minority groups and can work effectively with them.
- Forming interagency groups with representation from the minority group to help with planning for services and courses.
- Considering the role of the family and other social structures when encouraging young people from minority backgrounds to engage with the programme.

8.3.9 Enterprise programmes require thoughtful design and careful participant selection

While enterprise supports may not be appropriate for the majority of young people availing of SICAP services, for a small number of highly motivated young people this path may be suitable, particularly where a young person:

- is already engaged in self-employment type work;
- comes from a culture of self-employment;
- has expressed a very strong desire not to have a boss or work in traditional employment environments.

If self-employment supports are provided, it is useful to ensure that the programme:

- Meets an identified need, i.e. there are enough people for whom self-employment is an appropriate path and are interested in the course.
- Provides intensive, on-going support and business mentoring.
- Is tailored to the specific capacities, needs and challenges experienced by the young people engaging in it.
8.4 Partnerships

8.4.1 Partnerships benefit from structure and maintenance

The following structural elements were consistently regarded as effective in creating and maintaining positive relationships and good interagency working:

At the strategic level

- Establishing committees with a strategic planning focus, and including NEET engagement on the agenda.
- Clearly outlining common objectives.
- Ensuring clarity on what each service does and how duplication can be avoided as well as having clarity on working processes or the case management approach being used (i.e. through a Memorandum of Understanding).
- Planning and holding formal review meetings, at both staff and management levels.

At the practice level

- Informal, ongoing communication between staff.
- Opportunities for frontline staff to share good practice and reflect on local service delivery with their similarly positioned colleagues.

8.4.2 There are clear benefits to engaging with young people while still in school

Schools have an important role to play in supporting young people to access information and referrals that they will need when leaving the school environment. In general, providers may not have prioritised direct engagement with schools, since this work does not directly count towards achieving SICAP targets. However, many view this work as important in ensuring that young people do not fall through the gaps. A key goal of school based work is to inform the choices of young people by ensuring access to accurate information about their options. SICAP service have a well-developed understanding of what employers are looking for and are well placed to communicate this to young people. In addition, SICAP providers have detailed information on the large range of training programmes, state schemes and supports for further training and employment. This is vital information for young people who are still in school and are looking to clarify their next steps into employment or training.

8.5 Organisational development

8.5.1 It is important to deliver services in youth and community friendly environments

Running programmes and courses in community/youth friendly spaces was considered important in relation to attracting and maintaining young people. This was generally done by using ‘community owned spaces’ that PIs had developed over time as part of their community development strategies. Second to this was utilising youth friendly spaces in partner organisations. In some cases a café or a library fulfilled this requirement.

8.5.2 Follow-up ensures young people do not fall through cracks

Service providers used a variety of systems to ensure that clients receive appropriate follow-up. In general, service providers ensured that young people with more complex cases or lower motivation and skills received more personalised and targeted follow-up. The majority of young people interviewed agreed that follow-up supports were important, not just in their initial search for a job
or training course, but also as they began their journey. Service providers stated that the following factors made follow-up effective:

- Ensuring that young people feel that contact is not judgemental. They need to know that the service is there for them if things go well or not so well. The provider can also play a role in supporting young people to use learning to create next steps actions.
- Simple systems, such as record keeping, or dedicated time for follow-up calls, are important to ensure that all young people receive this service and no young person falls through the gaps.

8.5.3 Systems are required to improve information management systems

The Integrated Reporting and Information System (IRIS) forms the backbone of national programme performance and monitoring processes. For many services, transitioning from paper systems to IT information management systems took more than 12 months to reach a point where staff were confident and consistent in the system use. Factors that were considered beneficial in supporting this transition included:

- Having a named person responsible for supporting staff in using IRIS.
- Undertaking quality audits to help staff to better understand the standard required and what is needed to attain this standard.
- Ensuring that staff understood that data collection is not an addition to the work but a core aspect of the work.
- Having at least two people on the team with the skills and capacity to support other staff members in the use of IRIS and ensuring that these staff attend all Pobal IRIS training.
- Reviewing the possibility of merging any pre-existing forms with requirements from Pobal, for example consent forms, in order to reduce duplication.
- Integrating information on the use of IRIS into staff performance reviews.

8.5.4 Training, supervision and regular meetings support team development

Training for frontline staff is important for enabling the service to work with a vast array of needs and case complexity. Having a team with a shared skill set means that people from diverse work backgrounds are more equipped to communicate and problem solve. They are also in a better position to develop common language and frameworks in addition to their specialist knowledge and career experience. Training that was considered particularly pertinent to the work includes: career guidance, coaching, motivational interviewing, and technical IT skills related to data management, social media and website management. Staff highlighted the need for a supportive, solution focused culture within their teams. Opportunities to discuss and strategise the work formally and informally were considered key to this, alongside supervision and managerial supports.
9 Conclusion

The research found that overall young people regarded SICAP services as having met their needs. The vast majority of young people said that staff went the extra mile, showed care and were non-judgmental and engaging. The efforts of staff were noted and appreciated by young people, who, prior to accessing these supports, had experienced significant challenges in their attempts to gain employment.

A flexible, individualised approach was considered key by service providers, partner organisations and young people. This approach needs to influence all practices from initial advertising of the programme, engagement of young people through to service delivery and follow up. Good practice was also identified in relation to interagency co-ordination and internal organisational development. Overall the research identified 19 good practice recommendations that, if followed, have potential to improve outcomes for young people attending services.

There was significant progression for young people involved in the programme, both in relation to accessing education and, for a smaller number, in accessing employment. The success of the programme was also fully endorsed by young people, the vast majority of whom stated that their progression was due, wholly or to a significant degree, to the SICAP supports. Even those that attributed their progression to other factors, or had not made progression, overall, they considered the support and learning they received from the service providers to be very important and worthwhile. Young people stated that the range of individualised supports they received supported them to clarify what they wanted to do and take the first steps on this journey.
References


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Appendix 1: Case studies

Introduction

This appendix presents case studies developed from in-depth interviews with five PIs: Cork City Partnership, Donegal Local Development Company Ltd., South Tipperary Development Company Ltd., Wexford Local Development and Laois Partnership Company. These case studies outline good practice within each site from the perspective of the various stakeholders within the organisations and those they work with. Case study participant profiles were developed following interviews with management and staff, partner organisations and NEETs. As discussed in the methodology section, PIs were selected based on their success in engaging the most at-risk young people, as well as their client progression outcomes, based on IRIS data. The case studies informed the thematic analysis and are also summarised in this section of the report.

Case study 1: Cork City Partnership (CCP)

Background on programme implementer

The Cork City Partnership (CCP) has worked with young people who are socially isolated or disadvantaged for 20 years. Under SICAP, CCP offers a range of social inclusion programmes and supports for NEETs, including:

- Pre-employment supports, such as assistance with CV writing, interview preparation and pre-apprenticeship opportunities.
- Accredited and unaccredited training courses, such as first aid response, manual handling, point-of-sale training, computers and cosmetics.
- Self-employment and start your own business supports – these include mentoring, enterprise workshops and networking with local businesses.
- The Explore Programme; a pre-employment job sampling programme that helps young people become familiar with the workplace and understand their options.

Alongside these programmes, CCP offers a range of individual one-to-one supports, including assessment and mentoring, which aim to meet individual needs of each young person. All staff involved in delivering interventions in SICAP can work with NEETs.

Profile of NEETs worked with by CCP

Between April 2015 and December 2016, the CCP worked with a total of 243 NEETs, which comprised:

- 148 males and 94 females.
- 90% were aged 19 to 24 years and 10% were aged 18 years or younger.
- The majority of young people using the service (85%) had their Leaving Certificate and of these, 15% had post-leaving certificate qualification.
- 86% young people were white Irish or other white non-Irish, while 8% young people were part of a minority group.

The relative level of affluence or disadvantage for areas where NEETs lived was as follows:
- for 18% it was very disadvantaged;
- for 43% it was disadvantaged;
- for 18% it was marginally below average;
- for 16% it was marginally above average; and
- for 6% it was affluent or very affluent.

No NEETs were categorised as living in areas categorised as extremely disadvantaged or extremely affluent in CCP.

**What was particularly effective in CCP’s approach?**

**Involving NEETs in the planning and development of the SICAP programme**

The Partnership held consultations at the start of SICAP to understand the specific needs and issues experienced by young people in Cork. These findings were used to inform the design of its services and support a plan for how CCP would engage with young people. For example, CCP developed a range of activity based short non-accredited training programmes to address young people’s preference for non-academic training. This aimed to provide a learning environment that would be different to the one of school. Young people were also involved in an extensive community consultation led by Cork City Council, which engaged various at-risk populations. The report developed from this consultation helped to inform the approach to managing some of the broader social issues and challenges facing at-risk individuals in Cork. It also supported the decision for CCP to target homeless young people.

**Approaches for engaging NEETs**

CCP considers families and peers to be key referral agents for NEETs. To maximise the community’s knowledge of the SICAP services, the staff targeted families in the community. The goal was to ensure that parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles knew about SICAP and could encourage younger family members to attend. The following quote from the staff highlight the value of this approach:

> “What has worked for us is that people and families that have done a course or programme already with the partnership are almost pushing their child to us... it’s hard to turn the attention of a young person through a poster or social media. If we are known to a family or young person at a younger age there’s a better chance of them having an awareness of our work.”

Another method for engaging NEETs is by the Partnership sponsoring various recreational and sport activities for younger children. This approach helps get young people familiar with the Partnership and the SICAP programme:

> “We get them into activities by stealth through football clubs, youth café, soccer clubs or afterschool activities – but most of these participants tend to be slightly younger and not NEETs. But, if they fall into this category they are aware of the partnership and this is a big part of getting to know the family. Hopefully, everyone is aware of our supports.”

**Work with local businesses to tailor training to local employment opportunities**

The Partnership found that conversations with local employers are integral to understanding how to progress young people into employment. This connection also supports the partnership to
develop an understanding of what employers need from young job seekers. CCP used this knowledge to improve its training courses and one-to-one supports:

“*In our consultations with employers and youth services on how to help prepare young people for employment, they [local business people] highlighted a need for training that would help young people to cope on and learn to behave appropriately. Someone told us that they could teach a young person [workplace] skills, but they can’t teach them the personal skills they need.*”

CCP works with NEETs by aligning their non-accredited training directly with the workforce requirements of local businesses and employers. Staff state that this approach has led to increased progression into employment for NEETs. The training courses range from manual handling, point-of-sale, basic first aid, cosmetics and nail art, cooking and horticulture. Each course involves a combination of practical skills training, role play and coaching:

“We need to give young people the skills that will help them to build up their CV. If they don’t have skills needed to get into employment or training, we signpost them to our courses to get some more familiarity and experience.”

**Working with NEETs at their level and supporting them to resolve personal issues so they can progress into work and education**

Staff acknowledged that it can be challenging to work with young people who have significant barriers in their personal or family life, such as long-term unemployed parents and grandparents or where addiction issues are present. Another challenge that requires significant staff skills is supporting young people, who show a lack of motivation or interest in employment:

“*We meet them at their level. If you have your own prescribed agenda, it’s not going to work with a young person. You need to have empathy, because there can sometimes be lots of issues in their life and they might have challenges in their personal or family life.*”

The Explore Programme is an innovative approach used by CCP to introduce NEETs to different workplace environments, which gives them an opportunity to look at their employment choices in real terms. According to staff, young people get first-hand experience of jobs and begin building a personal inventory of skills and behaviours required in the workplace. This can significantly increase motivation:

“*With the Explore programme, we get young people to visit the staff at a job and the staff complete mock interviews with them. Our staff are bringing young people to these places and letting them know it isn’t scary.*”

**Going the extra mile and following-up with NEETs**

The Partnership regards follow-up as an important stage in positively closing their work with NEETs and ensuring appropriate wellbeing supports are in place. In follow-up sessions, staff found that some young people were feeling vulnerable or stressed and decided to provide some extra support and information on mental health services to respond to this. CCP works with the Springboard Project, a local counselling service, to offer NEETs an opportunity to access confidential counselling at no cost. In addition, staff members take extra steps to personally encourage their clients after they have disengaged, to reengage with services by making a phone call or sending a message. This is demonstrated by the following quote:
“If you don’t bring empathy about their support needs, you’re going to lose them again. Even a phone call in the morning before an interview, this can be really helpful to convince them to engage and keep going.”

Achievements and outcomes

In 2015 and 2016, a number of young people progressed into employment and education. Using the data available in the IRIS system, CCP reported that 122 NEETs progressed into education and 37 progressed into employment.

Case study 2: South Tipperary Development Company

Background on programme implementer

The South Tipperary Development Company (STDC) has delivered rural development and social inclusion programmes in South Tipperary since 2009. Under SICAP, STDC focused their initiatives and activities on four priority communities in the following areas: Carrick on Suir, Clonmel, Tipperary town and Slieveardagh area (Killenaule, Ballingarry, Glengoole). These initiatives include:

- Pre-employment training, such as CV writing, interview preparation, and wellbeing response action plan (WRAP) courses.
- A life coaching programme delivered one-to-one with NEETs called Explore Your Options.
- The Jump Start programme, a pre-apprenticeship or job sampling programme that offers young people an opportunity to experience working in various local businesses or industries.

Alongside these programmes, STDC offers a range of one-to-one supports, including assessment, mentoring, and support with personal development. These aim to support the needs of each young person. Six staff members work with NEETs under the SICAP programme.

Profile of NEETs worked with by STDC

Between April 2015 and December 2016 STDC worked with 172 young people:

- Of whom, 91 were male and 81 female.
- The vast majority (91%) were aged 19 to 24 years and 9% were aged 18 years or younger.
- 91% of NEETs had their Leaving Certificate and of these, 9% had a post-leaving certificate qualification.
- 86% of NEETs were white Irish or white non-Irish, while 6% of young people were part of a minority group.

The relative level of affluence or disadvantage of areas where NEETs lived was as follows:

- 39% were from disadvantaged areas;
- 28% were from areas marginally below average;
- 19% were from very disadvantaged areas;
- 13% were from areas marginally above average; and
- 2% were from affluent areas.

No NEETs in STDC were living in areas categorised as extremely disadvantaged, very affluent or extremely affluent.
What was particularly effective in STDC’s approach?

Using live register data to target disadvantaged youth in the local area

At the start of the SICAP programme, STDC decided that their initiatives and activities should target local areas with the most need or highest levels of disadvantage. Some staff reported that engaging with young people was a challenge due to the rural isolation of smaller communities and perceptions of unemployment:

“We focus on our work on certain geographic areas because there is a large number of young people. But, it is difficult because we’re also supporting young people in more rural areas... they live in a relatively small community, so if their peers are not working or going to school, they aren’t very motivated to get involved.”

Using data from the Live Register on unemployment numbers, STDC identified towns and rural areas with higher rates of unemployed young people and based their staff in these areas, so young people would not have to travel to an urban area to access the service.

Going door-to-door to work with young people and families

STDC regards families as important referrers to the service. To build community knowledge of the programme, staff walk door-to-door in estates and communities and talk about the service to families asking if they know young people interested in getting support. The following quote shows the benefit of this approach:

“At the start, we spent a lot of time making ourselves visible in the community to promote the service. We spent lots of unpaid time to create this awareness, like going door to door and sending texts in the evening to remind young people. I made a conscious effort to be known in the community and I don’t think this was a wasted effort - we got a lot of self-referrals afterwards.”

Approach to maintaining engagement with young people

Staff reported that there is a clear perception among young people that there are no employment opportunities and little chance of finding a job. Another challenge is that some young people have also disclosed other challenges preventing their progression into employment, education or training, such as a lack of confidence, mental health issues and poor coping skills. Staff regard one-to-one sessions as a useful approach for young people to share their worries and concerns:

“It’s an opportunity for a young person to tell their story, to hear about their circumstances and background – but it’s also a private place to offer guidance and create an action plan. In a one-to-one session, we can agree what are the barriers and dream about where they want to go.”

To extend this approach further, STDC offered staff training in coaching skills as well as the Wellbeing Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) course.

“The staff training has really helped working with young people that are reserved, vulnerable, feeling anxious, passive. It’s an interviewing technique that pays dividends. I have confidence in my own abilities that has helped with own engagement with NEETs that are feeling isolated, stressed or frustrated.”
Working with local employers to learn their recruitment needs

Recognising that young people display a mixture of issues and challenges in relation to their employment goals, STDC created the Jumpstart programme, which introduces young people to different workplace experiences. By partnering with local businesses, STDC tailors the interventions around a young person’s needs and arranges on-site visits for young people to gain knowledge and experience of working in a business or industry. As part of the programme, young people also receive one-to-one coaching and are offered a place on the WRAP course. The benefits of this approach for young people is demonstrated by the following comment:

“This programme helps young people to build social intelligence and resilience in a workplace. We heard lots of feedback about young people feeling bullied in work environments. It can be hard when you're the young person in the workforce; we do roleplay and storytelling.”

Achievements and outcomes

For 2015 and 2016, STDC reported that 97 NEETs progressed into education and 19 progressed into employment.

Case Study 3: Donegal Local Development Company

Background on programme implementer

The Donegal Local Development Company (DLDC) is a local development company based in Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. Under SICAP, DLDC offers a range of programmes and services to help NEETs in Co. Donegal to access education, training, employment and other forms of support, including:

- Exploring Options, a pre-employment and activation programme that involves developing goals, communication skills and mentoring.
- Jobs Clubs, a job readiness programme that involves CV writing, interview preparation and employment coaching.
- Non-accredited training courses, such as hospitality training, food services training and tourism industry training.
- Workshops for young people with support needs, such as a mental health workshops co-delivered with Mental Health Ireland and a young mothers group co-delivered with Foroige.

DLDC also offers a range of one-to-one supports, including assessment and mentoring, that are designed to meet the needs of each individual young person.

Profile of NEETs supported by DLDC

Between April 2015 and December 2016, DLDC worked with a total of 312 NEETs:

- 182 males and 130 females.
- 4% were aged 18 years or younger and 96% were aged 19 to 24 years.
- 67% of young people using the service had their Leaving Certificate and 33% of them had post-leaving certificate qualification.
- 82% young people were white Irish or white non-Irish, 7% young people were part of a minority group and 10% did not respond to the question on their ethnic background.
The relative level of affluence or disadvantage for areas where NEETs lived was as follows:

- 49% were from areas marginally below average;
- 37% were from disadvantaged areas;
- 10% were from areas marginally above average;
- 3% were from very disadvantaged areas;
- 2% were from affluent areas.
- No NEETs in DLDC were living in areas categorised as extremely disadvantaged, very affluent or extremely affluent.

What was particularly effective in DLDC’s approach?

Using consultations to build partnerships and develop referral pathways

Recruiting new young people into the programme, especially in rural communities where few service providers were working with NEETs, was a challenge. During the planning of the service, DLDC formed a working group of local service providers to discuss the various needs of young people and build a referral process for the service. Eventually, DLDC established three internal working groups for each SICAP goal. The working groups agreed on the importance of developing strong partnerships and the need for communicating regularly with local service providers:

“(In the working groups) we explained who we are, what we are doing and how they could make referrals into the service. We found that this was useful to an extent, and it required us to keep strong relationships with coordinators to support better interagency relationships.

We thought a lot about who would need to be on these groups.”

Additionally, management led internal consultations with staff to discuss recruiting young people into the SICAP programme. These focus groups helped to agree on the practice for working with NEETs and build a consistent approach to interagency working. As a result, DLDC established informal monthly meetings for staff to exchange information and discuss challenges and issues about their work.

Making presentations to introduce the service and build trust with other service providers

DLDC considers local service providers to be key referral agents for NEETs. When the programme started, staff decided to meet with local service providers and give presentations on SICAP to help build trust and maximise community knowledge:

“Initially, we wanted people to have a clear picture of the goals of the SICAP programme, and the purpose and objectives for the project. For them, it helped to identify people from their records and we could discuss how these people could be referred and how we could provide something particularly useful for their clients.”

This approach was useful for developing partnerships with local service providers and directly addressing any concerns about the SICAP programme, which can be demonstrated by the following comment:

“There were concerns that we would be overlapping with their programmes and we wouldn’t want to do anything that devalues their work. This helped facilitate buy-in and established trust with other community and voluntary groups. We’ve re-oriented our approach with local providers and emphasised that local providers help us because they are aware of NEETs.”
Undertaking research to learn specific needs of different young people

DLDC commissioned research into the needs of NEETs to improve engagement with hard-to-reach young people. Results from this report has informed DLDC’s approach to working with key referral agents, such as local service providers, schools and counselling services, as well as parents and families. It also encouraged staff to try new ways of building community awareness of the service. A key finding from this research was that early school leavers were considered at-risk and hard-to-reach. Recently, DLDC has worked with schools and CYPSC to improve referrals into the SICAP programme. It also developed an Applied Leaving Certificate programme to support progression into employment or self-employment.

Approaches to reaching out and maintaining engagement with NEETs

DLDC regards their commitment to finding creative ways of encouraging young people to participate and maintaining engagement as unique and integral to their approach. Staff have employed a ‘trial and error’ approach to understand what methods are effective or not effective at reaching NEETs:

“Ideas that are put on the table come from staff - we feel like we know the community and what they’re interested in. We give information through our partnerships and working groups. Also, we have close ties with people in communities that help us to quickly share information about our events and training: we found this works very well.”

An example of this approach is how DLDC paid for online advertising through Google Adwords and Facebook, but found that young people were not ‘clicking’ their ads. Instead, DLDC found that 30-second local radio advertisements and distributing pamphlets, posters and newsletters through Co. Donegal were the most effective.

DLDC has also tried new procedures for following-up with NEETs, which has helped staff with maintaining engagement with NEETs. DLDC developed an Excel spreadsheet for tracking young people that have disengaged from the service, which also records the various training courses they attended. This tool helps staff by automatically signalling when a follow-up call is needed and which training courses have been well-attended:

“We’re pulling people back into the service, because there is more trust and people are more willing to come into the service when we offer something they’re interested in. They are delighted to have us make follow-up call, they think you’ve forgotten them.”

DLDC also changed how places are offered on upcoming training courses. DLDC decided to prioritise NEETs that completed at least two interventions. Staff found this change has reduced the number of young people who disengage after one intervention:

“Last year, we had 180 people that only came to one intervention - so we changed the way that we do our recruitment. Our issue was that some people would attend a one-day workshop and now we started to prioritise people who complete their second interventions. Anyone that has attended a one-day intervention is placed on a waiting list if there isn’t space on a course.”
Developing an internal system for reviewing IRIS

A challenge for staff was the administrative time required to record client intervention data on the IRIS system. Some staff were concerned that administrative work has an impact on the amount of time spent working with young people, as demonstrated by the following quote:

“Young people are losing time with a staff person. The cohort we’re talking about needs a lot of handholding and conversation to gain confidence and trust, and it takes a while to build up.”

DLDC recruited a system administrator, who is responsible for supporting staff and providing direction on inputting information on the IRIS system. The system administrator regularly reviews client records to ensure information has been inputted correctly and attends any database training offered by Pobal. The value of this staff position can be demonstrated by the following quote:

“Our hope was to provide more support to staff and encourage more morale – we hoped this would help make dealing with administrative work easier. There is nothing we can do to improve IRIS except ask our system administrator to help improve our staff’s confidence, build IT skills and resolve issues quickly.”

Additionally, DLDC completes an internal audit of their IRIS system each quarter to review how client records are updated and tracked, and whether targets are being achieved throughout the year.

Achievements and outcomes

In 2015 and 2016, DLDC reported that 126 NEETs progressed into education and 20 progressed into employment.

Case Study 4: Wexford Local Development

Background on programme implementer

Wexford Local Development (WLD) are a local development company, located in Wexford town and serving the county of Wexford. They provide a range of supports and education opportunities to people in Wexford. The programmes offered, for both young people and older people, include:

- Manual handling / Safe pass
- Driver theory preparation
- Traveller health programmes
- Basic IT, Pre-ECDL, ECDL
- Time for Change - youth specific programme
- Food safety and hygiene
- Career focus and interview skills
- First Aid, Occupational First Aid, Paediatric First Aid
- Infection prevention and control, care of the older person
- Intellectual disability care
- Enterprise courses
- Beauty therapy
- First steps programme
The team attempts, where possible, to provide practical hands on programmes that help people to gain certifications, e.g. ECDL, HACCP (food hygiene), First Aid, Manual Handling, Fire Warden, and Forklift and Mobile Elevated Work Platform.

Profile of NEETs supported by WLD

Between January 2015 and December 2016, WLD worked with 575 NEETs:

- This comprised 340 males and 235 females.
- When this number of NEETs is separated by age category: 7% were aged 18 years or younger, and 93% were aged 19 to 24 years old.
- 84% of young people using the service had their Leaving Certificate or lower and 16% had post-leaving certificate qualification.
- 86% young people were white Irish or white non-Irish, 10% young people were from ethnic minorities and data was not available on 4% of young people.

The relative level of affluence or disadvantage for areas where NEETs lived was as follows:

- 6% were living in very disadvantaged areas;
- 33% were living in disadvantaged areas;
- 51% were living in areas marginally below average;
- 9% were living in areas marginally above average;
- 1% were living in affluent areas.
- No NEETs supported by WLD were living in areas categorised as extremely disadvantaged, very affluent or extremely affluent.

What was particularly effective in WLD’s approach

Location matters

The WLD team believes that the trust of the community is very important. This trust has been built over a long period of working with local families and has been sustained through WLD’s continued commitment to outreach and engagement at the community level:

“The community development team spend a lot of their time out, playing football, chatting to families. That’s the community, and we have to be part of it.”

The team talked about going out to outdoor spaces, shopping centres, post offices and local greens to talk to people in the community about what they need and what they would like in terms of courses or supports. This engagement also provided opportunities to inform them about WLD’s services and encourage them to engage.

Facilitating a safe, flexible and responsive relationship with young people

The WLD team felt that one of the most important factors in their success in engaging marginalised young people was the nature of the relationship they established with the young people. Relationship building relied on ensuring provision of a safe space to support young people to express and explore their ideas about what they wanted. This meant staff needed to be patient and lacking in judgement providing flexible and responsive supports.
“Bring them into a manual handling course to see where they are at in terms of comfort in learning and the abilities needed for learning.”

As well as providing flexibility and openness, there was an emphasis placed on the need to go the extra mile in terms of practical support, in order to keep people engaged:

“We’d phone some participants to talk about the course before the course starts. We’d send them reminder texts in the run up to the course again.”

The team also discussed how they would facilitate engagement with fuel vouchers and other schemes to ensure people could get to the programme. The team recognised the importance of having a considered strategy for engaging young people at risk. In practice, this understanding resulted in a community development worker trained to provide manual handling training, a course that was a popular point of entry for many young people. This worker created opportunities to engage with attendants on this skills based programme. It also provided an opportunity to assess additional needs and encourage young people to engage with other more intensive supports and training.

Working closely with local employers

The WLD team recognised how valuable it was to foster mutually beneficial relationships with local employers. They engaged employers in designing the training programme for young people. Employers were asked about ‘what would give our clients an edge’ and this information was used to adapt their programme. They used business engagement as an opportunity to develop relationships with employers, raise awareness of the programme and the young people who would be trained. The ultimate goal was increasing pathways into work placements and/or employment for their service users. As part of the programme, local employers were invited to sit on mock interview panels and make presentations to the group on how things work in the workplace. This resulted in beneficial relationships, where in some instances, the team could fast-track CVs to employers with vacancies on behalf of their clients. In addition to this, the team engaged local community groups in providing work experience and mentoring supports for young people. After the young people were finished with the community groups and if the young person they worked with had secured a job, WLD wrote to the sponsoring group to thank them and celebrate the young person’s success. The review showed that all of these groups were happy to engage in the programme again. Partly, this was due to the attention to communications and feedback provided to the programme partners.

Focussing on the specific needs of youth

The team in WLD talked about the need to ensure that supports, approaches and interventions are specific to the needs of young people. The team discussed the importance of helping young people to identify what they want, as opposed to what their parents want them to do, and providing one-to-one support from a tutor with experience in working with young people.

Progression for young people

In 2015 and 2016, 410 NEETs progressed into education and 45 progressed into employment after working with the Wexford Partnership Company.
Case Study Five: Laois Partnership Company

Background on the programme implementer

Laois Partnership Company (LPC) is the local development company for Co. Laois. LPC have six staff members on the SICAP team. The whole team works with young people who are NEET as well as individuals over 24 years old. The services provided to NEETs include:

- Pre-development programmes (both individual and group) in areas, such as health and personal communication.
- Individual mentoring: assessment and development of a personal action plan and support to attain goals outlined in the plan.
- Pre-employment supports, including CV building, job search support, and interview preparation.
- Certified and uncertified education and training programmes, including ICT, culinary skills, healthcare, horticulture and construction.
- Start your own business training supports, including bookkeeping and taxation, video editing, and Facebook for business.
- Referrals into specialised social or health supports. The service also has access to a qualified psychotherapist.
- Referrals to employment or education supports, either within the programme or externally, such as ETB courses and Enterprise Mentoring.

Profile of NEETs working with Laois partnership

In 2015 and 2016, LPC worked with a total of 178 NEETs:

- 101 males and 77 females.
- 5% were aged 18 years or younger and 95% were aged between 19 and 24 years.
- 87% were educated to Leaving Certificate or lower and 13% had post-leaving certificate qualification.
- 83% young people were white Irish or white non-Irish, while 15% young people were from ethnic minorities. No data was available for 3% of young people.

The relative level of affluence or disadvantage for areas where NEETs lived was as follows:

- 21% were living in very disadvantaged areas;
- 21% were living in disadvantaged areas;
- 39% were living in areas marginally below average;
- 16% were living in areas marginally above average;
- 2% were living in affluent areas.
- There were no NEETs supported by LPC that lived in areas categorised as extremely disadvantaged, very affluent or extremely affluent.

What was particularly effective in LPC’s approach

Knowing the community and being known in the community

LPC identified that being woven into the fabric of the communities they serve is a key success factor. The physical location of the service in the community and the consistent work to build strong relationships with community members were also considered important. Staff prided themselves on having an in-depth knowledge of what services are available in the community and what issues and challenges local people are experiencing:
“You have to make yourself aware of it. You have to ask questions. You have to support people with whatever they need.”

One of the key benefits of being rooted in the community is that the team can build up connections with young people and their families before they become NEET, which means young people come to them if and/or when they become NEET:

“The kids we played with a few years ago become the people you work with, or they tell their friends and cousins about us.”

One of the many mechanisms by which the team stays anchored in the community is by undertaking consultations and providing services themselves rather than bringing in third party providers. This helped to ensure the subtle feedback provided through informal mechanisms about the service is not lost and that relationships were consistently strengthened. The team also stated that a crucial part of their approach is providing services in an environment in which the local people feel comfortable and welcomed.

Building trust, respecting pace

A key feature of good practice is ensuring that staff act in a way that builds trust and credibility with young people. This means addressing young people’s key concerns. Confidentiality is vital to this as is developing trust and finding ways in which care can be evidenced to young people. Staff commented that with young people: ‘it’s not enough to say that you care or that you will do something’, this has to be evidenced. Trust needs time to develop:

“Having built up a level of trust with them was so important. You have to have credibility. Credibility means they know you will deliver. Trust means they know they can work with you and you won’t go around telling other people.”

The LPC staff recognised that imposing a fast or forced pace on disengaged young people would push them away from the service. In their view, many of the young people would pull back at the idea of doing ‘pre-employment supports’ or other formal programmes, if introduced too early in the engagement. These interventions had to be offered in more creative ways or after significant time had been spent building a relationship:

“They aren’t motivated and you have to spend a long time finding their strengths and helping to build their motivation. You learn who they are, what their background is, what they want... you have to take a holistic view of people. You can’t put a formula on someone.”

“I have young people coming in and who just have a chat and go. They don’t get anything, but after five visits they might then ask [for something or support]. We do things in an informal way, because formal ways would frighten them off.”

Instead, the team focused on ensuring that the service provides suitable starting points. For more marginalised young people, it was considered even more important to go at their pace:

“We engage with the hardest to reach women in our two programmes by doing baking or whatever they want, one or two mornings a week in a very informal way, before they go on to the pre-development course, which is the parenting programme. Everything we do is to help them along the education continuum.”

Going the extra mile

The team described how, despite minimal requirements from external providers, they have an internal policy to provide as much wraparound support to their service users as they reasonably can.
“We look at all the barriers that might stop them from getting employment and education and work with those barriers, whatever they are.”

LPC provided a number of examples of how they go above and beyond the expectations of funders or other providers in order to engage the most disadvantaged young people. Examples included:

- Drove young asylum seekers from Direct Provision to activities.
- Paid childcare for young parents to encourage engagement.
- Gave young people the mobile phone numbers of staff and taught them to use the free ‘call me’ function on their phones, so they could easily contact the team who would call them back as quickly as possible.

The team also talked about giving considerable attention when a young person did not attend training or support appointments and following up when they were referred on:

“If they don’t turn up [we] call them. There is a lot of capacity building and hand holding at the start. If you let someone go who doesn’t turn up, you’ll lose them... you ring them and ask them where they were and how they are.”

At one point, staff were coming across many young people experiencing difficulties arising from drug and alcohol abuse. In order to be able to support these young people, one of the staff trained in addiction studies and now runs groups specifically for young men with substance abuse issues.

**Progression for young people**

In 2015 and 2016, 126 NEETs progressed into education and 20 progressed into employment after working with the Laois Partnership Company.
Appendix 2: Selection of case studies

To select the PIs for case studies, a model was developed that involved selecting sites based on geographical and population spread and the level of client outcomes. To ensure that the sites included in the case studies represented both urban and rural sites, two providers were selected from Leinster and Munster and one was selected from Ulster/Connaught, and one from an urban site. Within these areas, PIs were selected based on a ranked list that looked at the level of client outcomes as well as the number of young people from at-risk groups who had been engaged as a proportion of overall young people engaged. There was a two to one weighting given to the two indicators, so that ‘engagement of at risk groups’ was weighted as twice as important as the outcomes indicators. This weighting was undertaken in order to reflect the importance of inclusion and accessibility as a quality indicator. The exact formulation of the outcome and at risk indicators used to create the ranking is outlined below:

**Outcome indicator:** Service provider’s data was cross tabulated across three outcome fields, to identify the service providers who had the highest proportion of successful outcomes for NEETs. The outcome indicators were: 1) successful or partly successful progression in education, 2) number of interventions and 3) successful progression into fulltime, part-time or self-employment. To produce the outcome score, services were ranked in order of 1–45 (45 being the number of individual PIs), for each of the three cross tabulated fields. The three ranks were then summed to give the service an overall outcome score. Services who had a greater proportion of NEETs with successful outcomes scored more favourably (lower) on the scale. Services were sorted by lowest to highest scores to ascertain their rank for outcomes.

**At risk groups indicator:** Service provider data was cross tabulated across five at risk group indicator fields, to identify the services who dealt with the most at-risk groups of NEETs. The at-risk group indicators were: 1) being from an ethnic minority, 2) being a lone parent, 3) having a disability, 4) coming from a jobless household, 5) being homeless or at risk of homelessness. To produce the score for at-risk groups, services were ranked on a scale of 1–45 for each of the five cross tabulated fields and were summed to give the service an overall at-risk groups score. Service providers who had a greater proportion of NEETs at-risk scored more favourably (lower) on the scale. Services were sorted by lowest to highest scores in order to ascertain their rank for at-risk groups indicator.
Appendix 3: Interview schedules and relationship to literature review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step or service provision feature</th>
<th>Potential good practice elements</th>
<th>References</th>
<th>Young people</th>
<th>Services (management and staff)</th>
<th>Partner organisations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identification of approach</td>
<td>Engaging NEETs/youth in planning</td>
<td>Advocates for Youth, 2005</td>
<td>1. Originally how did you plan your response to young people, (did this involve any of the following: formal service mapping, consultation with youth, consultation with services, research into good practice, external supports / consultancy, other. What did you learn from this?)</td>
<td>13. Have you been engaged in planning what services should be provided to NEETs. If yes how, if no would you like to have been and what would your recommendation have been?</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Head, 2011</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Patton, 2011</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mason et al., 2013</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Undertaking formal needs analysis / research</td>
<td>European Commission (a), 2016</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Third Sector Capital Partners, 2013</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Eurofound (a), 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engagement of partners</td>
<td>Engaging partner institutions</td>
<td>Wheeler, 2005 (7-18)</td>
<td>14. Is there a support you wanted but didn't get from them? (Prompt for: 1) mentoring, 2) referral to training education, 3) information on options, 4) apprenticeships, 5) help getting services in other areas of their lives.</td>
<td>1. Can you describe your relationship with (SICAP provider)?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Weigensberg et al, 2012 (52-69)</td>
<td>13. What were greatest challenges in relation to forming useful partnerships? How did you overcome challenges? 14. Who did you form partnerships with; can we rank these from most effective to</td>
<td>2. Were you working with NEETs/youth prior to SICAP?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. If you are working in partnership, how does this partnership help your objectives? 4. From your perspective, how</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Engagement of NEETs</strong></td>
<td>No good practice identified in literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Where did you hear about (service name)?</td>
<td>2. What are the most effective strategies for engaging NEETs?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. What made you want to work with them?</td>
<td>3. What are greatest challenges in relation to the engaging NEETs?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Did you know what you wanted from them (when you first starting working with them)?</td>
<td>/How did you overcome challenges?</td>
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<td>4. Did you know what you wanted going in there?</td>
<td>4. What did you do / would you do it again?</td>
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<td>5. Did they help you figure it out?</td>
<td>5. What did you try that didn’t work so well, how do you know?</td>
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</table>

15. Did your effective partnerships have any of the following qualities? (connected to a steering or working group or network, that had a (new) role in supporting engagement with SICAP / MOU or formal agreement / staff shadowing / staff swap/ regular review or management meetings / co-delivered services / shared premises)

16. What is the difference between an effective partnership and an ineffective one?

17. Do NEETs in your area have access to the local services and support they need? / what is missing?

18. Do you feel that there can be unnecessary competition for NEETs (ESF funded projects) from where? Is there anything that can be done to change this?

5. What made the partnership work / and or what would have made it work better?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service provision</th>
<th>Intensive NEETs supports are likely to be more intensive than low intensity supports</th>
<th>Pierce, 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sisson &amp; Jones, 2012</td>
<td>Maguire, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carcillo, 2015</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled and engaged staff</td>
<td>Bowie &amp; Bronte-Tinkew, 2006</td>
<td>Blanchet-Cohen &amp; Salazar, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Smyth &amp; Eaton-Erickson, 2009</td>
<td>Opportunity Knocks, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weigensberg et al, 2012</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Before accessing supports at (service), what were you doing? If you were trying to get into employment, education or training, how were you doing this?

7. About how many times did you go to (name of service?)
8. What did you do with them?
9. What was the best thing they did with you, why?
10. Did you ever feel that the staff went above and beyond for you? How?
11. Was there anything they did that was not good, why?
12. Did you have a clear idea of what your plans for education, employment or training were, or were you still exploring options? If so, did your plans change?
13. Did you feel the service was tailored to you?
15. Did you learn new skills? If so what?
16. Have you progressed onto education / employment / training? (Explore)?
a. How much of this progression was due to (name of service) (deadweight)? i.e. would you have done this anyway?

5. What interventions did you provide? What was most effective and why?
6a. What did you try that didn't work so well, how do you know?
6b. What does referral mean for your organisation - is it a call or letter? After this is there follow up to see if the person attended? Or if it suited the person?
7. How do you work with young people who do not know what they want to do? What works in relation to this scenario?
8. Are there structural or resource barriers, which stop NEETs from engaging in supports (other than personal motivation)?
9. How effective is the service for youth, from your perspective (1-10)?
10. Are there services or supports that are missing for youth in your area?
11. Do you think that SICAP staff have the appropriate skills?

6. What was effective in the way that (SICAP partner) provided services to NEETs?
7. What could have been improved in the way that (SICAP partner) provided services to NEETs?
8. Is the service provided by (SICAP provider) unique, or are there other similar services for youth?
9. How effective is the service for youth, from your perspective (1-10)?
10. Are there services or supports that are missing for youth in your area?
11. Do you think that SICAP staff have the appropriate skills?

Considered approach to data management | Galliers & Leidner, 2003 |
<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Turner et al. 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ní Ógáin et al., 2013</td>
<td>17. Was there anything they did with you, which was particularly memorable?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruchterman, 2016</td>
<td>18. In your opinion what are the things that could stop you progressing in the direction you want? How could services better help you with these?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weigensberg et al., 2011</td>
<td>19. Can we ask a few things about yourself (you don't have to answer), so can understand a little more where you are coming from.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible programming</td>
<td>a. What is your age?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peirce, 2009</td>
<td>b. How long were you unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Sector Capital Partners, 2013</td>
<td>c. Do you have any children? If yes, how many?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gupta et al., 2016</td>
<td>d. Are you receiving a disability payment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e. Have you had challenges with how you are feeling? i.e. feeling depressed or anxious? Does it affect you looking for work or education? Did they offer you supports? (Refer on if required, see guidebook for ethics).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f. When did you finish secondary school? If not, how old were when you left school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20. What’s next for you in relation to work and training?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21. If there is one piece of advice you have for services working with young people what would it be?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

> learning difficulties (numera, literacy)  
> young mothers  
> exposure to violence  
> poor support structures  
> lack of coping  
> mechanisms/resilience  
> physical isolation (inability to travel)  
> lack of experience in family of work / welfare culture  

11. Is there anything particularly innovative you have done to engage or deliver services to NEETs (that we have not already discussed)?
| Follow up | Continued support/engagement post placement in education, training or employment | Peirce, 2009  
BIS, 2013  
Brunello & Schlotter, 2011  
Devlin, 2015  
European Commission (c), 2016  
Gupta et al., 2016 | 16b. Did they follow up with you to check how it was going? Did they ask you back in for another session, how did they try to get in touch with you?  
c. Will you go back / will you keep in touch with them to get on-going supports? Why / why not? | 12a. What process do you have for closing cases, how does this work?  
12b. How do you manage follow up and case closure? What are the biggest challenges and what works in addressing these?  
12c. When do you stop working with a client / how is this decision made. Would you do more if you were less resource constrained - what? | 12. Did the partnership follow up in relation to individual clients - was this beneficial? |

| Staff Development | There are significant amounts of good practice in general in relation to this area, although none was identified with a specific NEETs focus. | 22. Do all of your staff work with NEETs if you have particular staff assigned to this area, how many? Are targets team targets or individual targets?  
23. Of the staff working with NEETs, how many have a youth work qualification or at least one year’s experience of working directly with youth?  
24. Did working with NEETs require new skills in team, if so how were these developed?  
25a. How engaged (define engagement) are your staff team on average (reminder of confidentiality) (1 - 10)?  
25b. How high is morale within the staff team? (1-10)  
26. Are there specialised skills/knowledge/experience on your staff teams? If so, what staff... |
| | | skills/knowledge/experience do you find most impactful/effective? 27. How did you ensure a quality interventions and learning within your organisation? |
### Appendix 4: ESF programmes in Ireland and SICAP definition of NEETs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding stream</th>
<th>Funding stream priorities</th>
<th>Activity/programme</th>
<th>Intermediate body/ beneficiary body in Ireland</th>
<th>Specifically targets NEETs</th>
<th>Has shown benefit to &gt;25(^{35})</th>
<th>Potential impact on NEETs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>European Social Fund via PEIL 2014-2020</strong></td>
<td>Promoting the attainment of sustainable and quality employment through relevant upskilling measures and supporting labour mobility</td>
<td>ETB Training for the Unemployed</td>
<td>DES/ SOLAS</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Springboard</td>
<td>DES/ HEA</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ICT Skills Conversion Course</td>
<td>DES/ HEA</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Momentum (LMETF)*</td>
<td>DES/ SOLAS</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EU Intra Mobility</td>
<td>DSP/ EURES National Coord. Office</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promoting social inclusion, combating discrimination and promoting equal opportunities</td>
<td>Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)*</td>
<td>DHPCLG/Pobal/ LCDCs &amp; Programme Implementers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Youthreach*</td>
<td>DES/ SOLAS</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (15-20yrs)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs)</td>
<td>DJE/ Community Programmes Unit, Irish Youth Justice Service</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes (12-17yrs)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Young Persons Probation (YPP) Projects</td>
<td>DJE/ Probation Service, Community Programmes Unit, Irish Youth Justice Service</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Social Inclusion of Prisoners/Ex-offenders</td>
<td>DJE/ Irish Prison Service</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disability Project</td>
<td>DSP/ Disability &amp; Illness Policy DSP</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Programmes</strong></th>
<th><strong>Organizations</strong></th>
<th><strong>Involvement</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integration and Employment of Migrants</td>
<td>DJE/ Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tus Nua</td>
<td>DJE/ Probation Service, Community Programmes Unit</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Equality</td>
<td>DJE/ Gender Equality Division</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality Mainstreaming</td>
<td>IHREC/ IHREC</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investing in education, training &amp; life long learning w/view to upskilling/ re-skilling the labour force</td>
<td>Third Level Access</td>
<td>HEA/ Higher Education Institutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back to Education Initiative</td>
<td>SOLAS / Education and Training Boards</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adult Literacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth Employment Initiative</td>
<td>Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) Scheme</td>
<td>DSP/ Employment Support Services DSP</td>
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<td>JobsPlus Incentive Scheme</td>
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<td>Tus</td>
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<tr>
<td>JobBridge, National Internship Scheme</td>
<td>DSP/ Employer Engagement DSP</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Programmes that are also encapsulated under the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) (McGarry & Fitzpatrick, 2015)*

All programmes are intended to support horizontal goals of promoting: Equality between men and women, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, social inclusion, and sustainable development.
PEIL Priority 4 - YEI and the national definition of NEETs

YEI was designed to support young people in Europe’s regions who are worst affected by youth unemployment and is dedicated to young people aged between 15-24 years who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs). A national definition of eligibility for YEI (NEETs) allows for a decision to be made locally as to whether a SICAP participant aged between 15-24 years - at the date of being recorded as a SICAP participant - is eligible for the YEI special allocation in 2015 and must be strictly adhered to. The YEI evaluation being conducted in late 2015 will allow for a decision by the European Commission in 2016 as to the basis for YEI continuance. As described in ESF Circular 1/2015, YEI co-financing is claimable for a young person if the person is:

1. Not less than 15 and under 25 years of age, and,
2. Not in employment. This can include persons that meet any of the following criteria:
   i. On fulltime Jobseekers payments or credits, One Parent Family Payment, Disability Allowance or Illness Benefit. This can include persons eligible for fulltime Jobseekers payment or credits due to lack of work even if registered as self-employed, or,
   ii. That have not been in employment for 312 days or more in the previous 18 months (which is equivalent to national thresholds for entitlement to unemployment welfare payments) or in receipt of earning less than €9,776 (£188x52) in the previous 12 months (which is the current standard unemployed single person’s welfare allowance). This allows for some ‘casual work’ in the period prior to entering the YEI operation, or,
   iii. That have self-certified or self-declared that they are not in employment/inactive. A record must be available from the relevant body to demonstrate this self-certification or self-declaration.
3. Not in fulltime education leading to an accredited qualification. This can include persons that meet any of the following criteria:
   i. On fulltime Jobseekers payments or credits, One Parent Family Payment, Disability Allowance or Illness Benefit. This can include person eligible for fulltime Jobseekers due to lack of work even if registered as self-employed, or,
   ii. On work experience programme where fulltime accredited education is not an element of the programme, or,
   iii. From disadvantaged groups that maybe registered for, though not necessarily actively participating in, fulltime accredited education that have demonstrated (e.g. through needs and risk assessments) the necessity for more focused supports to tackle the risk and needs identified, to better prepare them for the labour market and improve their employment prospects, or,
   iv. That have self-certified or self-declared that they are not in formal fulltime education. A record must be available from the relevant body to demonstrate this self-certification or self-declaration.
4. Not in fulltime training leading to an accredited qualification. This can include persons that meet any of the following criteria:
   i. On fulltime Jobseekers payments or credits, One Parent Family Payment, Disability Allowance or Illness Benefit. This can include person eligible for fulltime Jobseekers due to lack of work even if registered as self-employed, or,
   ii. On work experience programme where fulltime accredited training is not an element of the programme, or,
   iii. From disadvantaged groups that may be registered for, though not necessarily actively participating in, fulltime accredited training that have demonstrated (e.g. through needs and risk assessments) the necessity for more focused supports to tackle the risk and needs identified, to better prepare them for the labour market and improve their employment prospects, or,
iv. That have self-certified or self-declared that they are not in formal fulltime training. A record must be available from the relevant body to demonstrate this self-certification or self-declaration.