

**TURNING THE CURVE  
On 16 to 18 Year Olds Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)  
in NEWCASTLE, UK**

**Context:**

Connexions is a service tasked with providing information, advice, guidance, support and referral to all young people in England aged between 13 and 19 and up to 25 for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The key measure of success is reducing the number of 16-18 year olds who are not accessing education, employment or training (NEET)

Connexions Tyne and Wear is the organisation responsible for delivering the Connexions service to young people across the sub-region of Tyne and Wear in the north-east of England. The Newcastle Connexions team is one of 5 area teams tasked with delivering the Connexions service to the 30,000+ young people educated in the City of Newcastle.

In terms of the success of the outcomes accountability approach, it is important to see the Newcastle team in the Tyne and Wear context. The data in Newcastle at the start of delivering the service via the outcomes accountability approach were 1% worse than the Tyne and Wear average and are now 1.9% points better. And, over a 5 year period, while Tyne and Wear has reduced its number of young people not in education employment or training by 3.9% points, Newcastle's figure over the same period has gone down by 6.8% points.

**Service, population and history:**

Connexions in Tyne and Wear was created by the amalgamation of two careers services in 2002.

The careers services were tasked with interviewing and drawing up an action plan for every year 11 student. They succeeded well at this since it was an easily controlled measure with a primary focus on output and process (top left quadrant performance measure) as opposed to outcome.

When Connexions was created, the charge extended to work with all young people aged 13-19 and up to 25 for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. At the same time the service was tasked with achieving a reduction in the percentage of young people aged 16-18 who were not engaged in employment, education or training (NEET) a lower right quadrant performance measure (that also doubles as a population indicator).

This new target caused great consternation amongst both managers and practitioners since it moved the service out of the comfort zone of controlling activity to having to influence outcomes for young people over which they had no real control. This was made more threatening by the fact that the area had historically high NEET figures compared with national averages.

In Newcastle in November 2003 when the annual count takes place the NEET figure stood at 15%, higher than the Tyne and Wear average of 14.1%. More importantly the figure had

remained more or less static for the previous decade. Fortunately for Newcastle it was around this time that the local manager received training in outcomes accountability as a way of working!

**What Happened:**

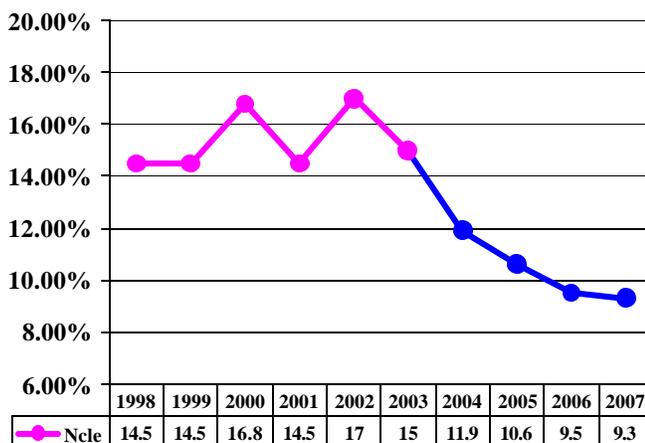
The Local Manager delivered Outcomes Accountability training first to the management team and then the whole team. Staff began to look at their work with young people in a different way, placing less significance on how many times or how long they spent with clients and changing the emphasis to the difference that their interventions made. Staff also began to look more closely at the barriers facing young people who were NEET and networking with other agencies to support the removal of those barriers increased dramatically.

At a management level a fresh look was taken at the team delivery plan and the plans delivered in partnership with other organisations, schools for example. Using the “do what you always did and you’ll get what you always got” view plans were reviewed in terms of the impact that they would have rather than “this institution has 1,000 students and will therefore get 2 days per week of PA time regardless of the characteristics and issues facing those students.”

This year we have recognised that the delivery plan as it stands is helping us to achieve well but that as we drill down further into the most hard to help NEET young people more of the same will not continue to get results. We have now developed a new initiatives delivery plan to supplement the standard one and through this we are trying out new ways of working in order to improve outcomes for young people e.g. linking with adult services to target workless households.

**What is better:**

**Newcastle NEETs with provisional 2007 figures correct as of 9<sup>th</sup> November.**



**N.B – The methodology for counting the figures has changed slightly from earlier reports, but now represents the most accurate historical data as we can provide.**

I believe that at least part of the success of Newcastle's reduction in NEETs is due to the dissemination of outcomes accountability as a way of working to ALL staff in the team. Practitioners working directly with young people, see that they can have impact on individual lives and without this impact on individuals we cannot achieve impact for populations.

In addition those members of staff traditionally sidelined i.e. clerical and admin staff have been included in the dissemination of this way of working. This means that their value in terms of achieving outcomes is publicly acknowledged by management and that acts as a real boost and motivator. It is critical to remember that these are often the staff who have first contact with clients on reception and first impressions count! They are also the members of staff who are responsible for the collation and input of critical data, the value of which cannot be underestimated. After one team awayday a member of the admin team who had experienced some very demotivating management styles (in another team!) in the past came up to me and said "It's really good to know that what I do makes a difference too." That is probably the piece of evaluation I value most in my history of being a manager.

- The NEET data acts as a proxy indicator for young people being able to achieve economic well-being. In Newcastle 30% of children and young people live in workless households and child poverty is a critical issue. While there is no quick fix for this the more we can change the acceptance of multi-generational unemployment the more like we are to be able to alleviate child poverty.
- By adopting the outcomes accountability approach it is possible to assess staff deployment in terms of achievement and ensure that resources are placed where they can have most impact. We undertook a review of our Multi-Agency/NEET Team's deployments and as a result identified 39 half days per month that could be used more effectively.
- The concept of having an impact is easy to understand and has been embraced by staff. It gives practitioners the opportunity to look at creative solutions to supporting young people to progress.

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10<sup>th</sup> November 2007