



Ian Jeffers, Director, Princes Trust NI

Discusses..... A 'Neet' Problem



This isn't a typo. The government have created a short word that hides a massive problem. NEET is the overly simplistic way to refer to the growing number of people not in employment, education or training. In Northern Ireland there are over 52,000 young people who fall into this category. If we shorten it from Not in Employment, Education or Training to NEET it becomes catchy, easy to say and simple to forget. In truth it is a very 'neat' way to deal with a horrendous crisis.

We are creating a lost generation. And we will all be paying for it for years to come. If we don't invest today in our young people then we can't complain in 5 or 10 years time that we don't have the people with the right skills to fill jobs, or that our tax bill is too high because of more people needing increased medical and social welfare support.

It's tough enough to look after your own business at the moment before you start worrying about others. But I will argue that the NEET problem must be tackled today. It's a social issue that needs a collaborative approach. The figures hide a stark truth – over 30% of young people who fall into this category believe that they have nothing to looking forward to. Many have suicidal thoughts and today in Northern Ireland we have thousands of young people who feel worthless. This is hardly the foundation for a strong economic recovery.

A small amount of money invested in a young person to keep them engaged at school, provide a training opportunity or to help them set up their own business will save thousands of tax payers' pounds in the years ahead. To support a young 15 year old who is at risk of exclusion from school can cost less than £250 thanks to The Prince's Trust xl club. If they are excluded it will cost us, the tax payer, £15,000 .

Keeping a young person in custody in Northern Ireland costs £81,340 whereas to train a volunteer to mentor a young offender to ensure they do not re-offend is £1,250 via The Prince's Trust 1:2:1 programme.

All our young people deserve a chance to succeed. They should not be victims of budget cuts and cost reduction exercises. Our collective role in the months ahead is to make sure the young unemployed do not become unemployable.

Ian Jeffers
Director, Prince's Trust Northern Ireland

The Trust will support over 3,300 young people in Northern Ireland this year who are not in employment, education or training and make sure they have a chance to succeed. To find out more visit <http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/>