

Lazy, unqualified, and unfit for work? Stories of the young unemployed in the East Midlands

Beth Suttill, School of Management

'Chavs'

'Dole
dossers'

'Lazy'

The Research

Being NEET (not in education, employment or training) has adverse consequences for the individual, society and the economy. Yet despite a host of government initiatives to try and 'tackle' the issue, the NEET rate in the UK has remained fairly constant for over a decade, suggesting that a new approach is needed.

This research explores the experiences of a group of 24 young people on a course for those who are NEET in an area of the East Midlands. It looks at whether their stories fit with the generalisations made about NEET young people on which government policy is based; where unemployment has been linked to a lack of aspirations, skills and qualifications.

'Youths'

'Hoodies'

'Reprobates'

Bella's Story

Bella used to be homeless. She lived at the YMCA for a year and a half where she fell pregnant. Due to this she was not able to finish her course at college.

After being on the waiting list for a year and a half, she was accepted for a council house. She also found a job. However, she struggled to find a nursery place for her 7 week old daughter who had health problems. She was therefore unable start work and so attended the centre.

After the course, she applied to do an Open University course in Childcare.

Gabby's Story

Gabby has epilepsy, ADHD and anxiety issues. She is also prone to panic attacks. She feels like she has struggled because of her disabilities and so far she has only been able to do college courses.

Gabby thinks that everyone is struggling because of the recession and cut backs.

By the end of the course she felt like she was making progress as she had overcome her fears and managed to go into town by herself. She applied for an apprenticeship scheme at a chocolate shop.

Findings

The young people had fairly traditional aspirations, based around wanting a family, a house and a job, yet they felt they faced a number of barriers. The most common were lack of work experience and lack of qualifications. However, the two stories above demonstrate the different issues these young people are facing.

A one size fits all approach to helping these young people is not suitable. Instead there should be a focus on looking at them as individuals, acknowledging their specific circumstances, and helping them with issues which may not directly get them into work, but which will help them in the long term.



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