

Who's around NEET – and Why? Young Men from Somali Backgrounds



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with
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**Commissioned by the Central Collegiate of Manchester
in partnership with
Focussing First on People**

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“NEET is a white British issue.”

Statistician

“Time and time again the first story I get from them, the common background, is they’re lost in the classroom, a lack of culture and communication language. A lot of them give me the impression that they feel isolated, they feel devalued they are not getting anything out of the system. It’s not working for them.”

Connexions school based advisor

“What they really need in the school is a full-time ESOL alongside the curriculum.No set person dealing with ESOL at school.”

Connexions school based advisor

“We did try and ask for information [from schools] on people who had been excluded or absent for long times but that’s not started happening yet.”

Connexions school based advisor

“The problem with the cohort is that only 42% of year 11’s last year were present in year 7.”

School strategic lead on children at risk of NEET

“That’s the way they sell it to us “it’s your fault”. It’s an unofficial process. All the African Caribbean and mixed race boys in my class were excluded [in the 1990’s]. Makes that person feel responsible without highlighting that the school has a responsibility...a big flaw is being unraveled. Those that don’t fit will be dropped and glazed over.”

Community based worker

“I would go to the school. They would send a letter. Someone would read that letter for me.”

Mother of Young Somali man

“Us - Somali young men who have a lot to say - are the people who can help.”

Young Somali man

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Introduction

In the spring of 2008 dialogue with Focussing First on People¹ enabled the Central Collegiate² to become aware that within the Somali communities there were a number of young people who had become separated from any form of education, employment or training before or shortly after³ the end of their Year 11 at school. However, this impression did not appear to be borne out in the statistical data⁴ gathered by the Central Collegiate schools involved and collated by Manchester City Council.

Accordingly, the Central Collegiate decided to commission some research that would help to illuminate how the statistical base on young people at risk of NEET was actually constructed. It would explore whether and how those statistics connected up with what was actually happening to these Somali young people and why.

We were approached as independent researchers with backgrounds in research about both the Somali community of Manchester⁵ and meaningful learning⁶. Preliminary discussions with the Central Collegiate and Focussing First on People broadened the scope of the research to include young people from Ethiopia and Eritrea.

A research specification was then developed that identified three information sources:

- Constructors of statistical data who could enable our access to statistical data about NEET in Manchester
- Connexions and school based staff within the eight schools of the Central Collegiate who had specific responsibilities for working with young people at risk of becoming NEET
- Community based informants that would include the parents of Somali, Eritrean and Ethiopian young people directly affected, and the young people themselves

The study has been, therefore, both exploratory and heavily circumscribed. It has collected data from the schools of the Central Collegiate, Connexions, and some Manchester City Council staff who work strategically and who are based in the centre of the city. It has not gathered any data from any of the several other agencies that are directly involved in this issue⁷. Their roles are left for future research to consider.

¹ Focussing First On People provides the BME community, particularly those from African and Caribbean backgrounds, to avail opportunities in the Northwest of England. www.ffop.co.uk

² Cedar Mount, Chorlton High School, Loreto High School Manchester Academy, St Peters, Trinity, Whalley Range, Wright Robinson

³ By the time the intended destinations statistics for Year 11's are collated in the December following the July end of the school year

⁴ The Connexions 'Destinations' dataset that is based upon the Annual Activity Survey carried out by Connexions for the Department of Children and Families Services (DCFS)

⁵ Moran R.A., Mohamed Z. and Lovel H. (2006) Breaking the silence: participatory research processes about health with Somali refugee people seeking asylum. In Moran and Temple (eds) *Doing Research with Refugees*, Bristol: The Policy Press.

⁶ McLarty, L & Moran, R.A. (2009) *Engaging all young people in meaningful learning after 16: a qualitative study.* London: Equality and Human Rights Commission

⁷ According to the Learning and Skills Act service provision to young people ages between 13-19 requires joined up working across seven key government bodies including Local Authority; Health Authority; Learning and Skills Council; Police; Probation; Young Offending Team; Primary Care

Aims and objectives

The research had two aims:

To contribute to understanding why the perceived gap exists between the statistical information base about who is being recorded as **not moving** from school into some form of education, employment or training at 16⁸ and the experiences of Somali young people themselves

To explore if any overlap, or triangulation⁹, exists between the statistics, the perspectives of the professionals involved in helping young people to avoid becoming NEET, and the families directly affected

It sought to achieve these aims through the following objectives:

Liaise with appropriate professionals in order to collect and analyse any relevant statistical information that may be held by schools, Connexions or Manchester City Council

Collect and analyse data from key staff informants, identified for us by the schools themselves, about their perceptions of how issues relating to NEET within the target populations are addressed and the opportunities for accurate measurement and meaningful intervention

Collect and analyse data from Connexions staff, identified for us by Connexions, about their perceptions of how issues relating to NEET within the target populations are addressed and the opportunities for accurate measurement and meaningful intervention

Collect and analyse data from families directly affected, including young people themselves, about what has happened to them and what could help them in the future

In addition, we hoped to identify whether some of the young people who we interviewed would consider forming a core group that could begin to articulate their concerns and ideas, as a collective, in the future.

The project went live in the autumn of 2008.

⁸ Excluding pregnant young women, young people in prison, young people with short term illnesses

⁹ Triangulation seeks to examine existing data to strengthen interpretations and improve policy and programs based on the available evidence. By examining information collected by different methods, by different groups and in different populations, findings can be corroborated across data sets, reducing the impact of potential biases that can exist in a single study.

Methodology

Introduction

This area of study is sensitive and complex. The approach needs to enable informants to talk honestly about what concerns them. For this reason, at the beginning of all our interactions with staff, families and young people we emphasised that our purpose is simple.

As researchers, we:

Are not interested in apportioning blame

Are interested in contributing to constructive dialogue and developing knowledge about how to improve the educational outcomes for the young people who are the focus of this study

Background Literature

We identified, collected and appraised of a number of relevant background documents, including research reports¹⁰. Some of these were made available to us by staff from Connections and the Local Authority. Others were sent by people from members of the Somali communities in the UK who have heard about the research and want to help.

Developing a quantitative baseline dataset for analysis

Preliminary scoping discussions were held with strategic level staff in Central Collegiate and Connexions, Focussing First on People and Manchester City Council NEET Coordination staff, including those responsible for controlling the data for both the Local Authority and Connexions.

A series of written requests were then made to appropriate staff to elicit schools-based and Connexions-based statistical datasets. We were looking for suitably anonymised information that, when it was considered as a whole, could demonstrate the movement of pupils in and out of NEET/NEET related categories across the schools. We asked for gender and ethnicity tagged records about the July 2008 Year 11 cohort. In this cohort, from year 9 through to the December following year 11, who was being recorded as being at risk of - or actually counted as – NEET?(Appendix 1)

Our preliminary analysis of the data that we accessed appears in the statistical results section (pages 10 -17) and it led us to make two adjustments to our plan.

¹⁰ Ahmed S. (2009) *Seen and Not Heard. Voices of Young British Muslims*. Markfield, Leicestershire: Policy Research Centre. ISBN 978-0-9561418-0-4; Better Choices Limited (2008) *NEET Prevention: A Guide for Manchester Colleges Connexions* Manchester; Connexions, Manchester (2005) *Know the NEET*; MANCATT (2006) *Somali Voice Project Report*. Manchester; Mohamoud M.A. (2009) *How can we tackle the underachievement of our children? Facing up to our problems*. Presentation at the Al-Furqaan Centre, Manchester, 20th June 2009; Somali Youth Development Resource Centre (2009) *Conference report and Conclusions on the London Somali Youth: In Search for a United Voice. Establishing a London Somali Youth Forum*. SYDRC: London; Equality and Human Rights Commission ((2009) *Staying On*. EHRC: London ISBN 9781842061626

Firstly, we dropped our search for data about Eritrean and Ethiopian young people.

Secondly, we placed a second round of written requests for statistical information about exclusions – temporary and permanent – that related to the same cohort over the same time period (Appendix 2).

Our subsequent analysis of the statistical data forms the introductory section of the statistical findings (pages 11-13).

Gathering qualitative data

Using the Client Caseload Information System (CCIS) Requirement¹¹ as our guide for constructing questions (Appendix 3), we conducted semi-structured, small-group discussions with 11 Connexions staff connected to the schools. These discussions were either tape-recorded and fully transcribed, or fully noted, at the time they occurred.

Meeting face to face with school staff directly proved more difficult. Most often the school staff asked that we liaise directly with the Connexions staff attached to their school. However we were able to conduct face to face, partly-structured (Appendix 4), contemporaneously noted or tape-recorded interviews with two senior members of staff in two of the schools, both of whom had overall responsibility for their children who may be at risk of becoming NEET. In addition, we conducted a single telephone conversation with a similarly senior member of staff from a third school and followed this up with a specific set of questions to them for response (Appendix 5).

Group and one to one discussions with young Somali men were enabled through a combination of the staff based in the community organisation Trinity House based in Rusholme, Focussing First on People based in Moss Side, and our own community based networks that have evolved over the last 17 years.

Seven young men participated in a tape recorded, unstructured focus group where we asked them about what had happened for them at school and why. A further seven young men participated in unstructured, fully noted interviews with us. These were conducted either at Trinity House in the presence of the community and youth worker based there who we also interviewed and who used his networks to bring the young men to us, or in their homes.

In addition we used simultaneous translation between Somali and English as we contemporaneously noted, in English, our interviews with two mothers and one father in their own homes. We also used similar tools to interview one young man's aunt.

Analysing the qualitative data

We applied variations on the theme of constant comparative thematic analysis¹² to all three qualitative datasets.

¹¹ Department for Children Schools and Families, 2008. *Client Caseload Information System. CCIS Requirement 2008-9*. January 2008. London

¹² Glaser, B.G. (1965) The Constant Comparative Method of Qualitative Analysis. In *Social Problems*, Vol. 12, No. 4: 436-445.

The research questions that had guided our meetings with the Connexions and schools based staff, all conducted exclusively in English, formed the overarching analytical framework for their data. Within this framework, the data from these informants were read and re-read to produce an initial draft of theme-based findings. This draft was then circulated by email to all the informants and they were asked to comment on, amend or amplify its content prior to our production of the final report.

Beyond initiating our interactions by inviting them to tell us about what had happened to them, or their children, the interviews conducted with young people and parents were completely unstructured¹³. They were conducted using either a combination of simultaneous translation between Somali and English or solely conducted in English. In this way, we intended to encourage people to actively explore subject matter which we knew would be personal, intimate and emotional for them. We hoped to achieve some form of deep disclosure¹⁴ with our emphasis being to enable their authentic expression of their deep knowledge about their experiences (after Gubrium and Holstein, 2001).

The data from the young people was read and re-read to create a single story – EVERYYOUNGMAN (pages 35-38) - with themed sub-headings that included examples from the full range of issues that they had disclosed in their group and individual sessions. Then, a network of nine young men¹⁵, including several who had been interviewed and who are currently NEET, were invited to amend and amplify that story prior to the production of the final version.

The parents' data were read and re-read until it became possible to organise it according to the themes that it addressed. At this point, examples from each of the themes were included in parents' findings document with sub-headings and then circulated among the parents for their views prior to producing the final version.

¹³ In unstructured interviews respondents are seen to have their own agency, selfhood, and thus are not simply 'respondents' answering the questions posed by the interviewer. Interviewees can tell their biographical stories in their own way.

¹⁴Johnson, J.M. (2001) In depth interviewing', in J. Gubrium and J. Holstein (eds.) *Handbook of interview research: context and methods*, Thousand Oaks: Sage

¹⁵Who are in a nascent formation as a result of the work of Trinity House and this research.

Statistical Baseline

What is being counted?

Rigorous tracking to identify early those young people who are, or at risk of becoming, NEET is one of the four key components of the Government's strategy on NEET¹⁶. This tracking is necessary for people to receive the immediate support that they need. Simultaneously, it enables schools to evaluate their information, advice and guidance (IAG) Services on the basis of the information that becomes available through tracking about the destination of their former pupils.

However, it has proved most challenging – and ultimately impossible – for us to either acquire or construct a complete, anonymised and unrelated, standardised, statistical dataset covering an entire year cohort for the Manchester Central Collegiate area. We believe that this could help us to establish a baseline set of information about how and when young people from our target population are perceived to be at risk of, or have become, NEET. This is because such a dataset would illuminate the statistical processes that are applied to young people who are being educated in the schools that are located in Manchester's Central Collegiate area in order to label - and subsequently count - them in relation to NEET.

In addition, it has proved beyond our abilities/sphere of influence to secure a set of standardised statistical information that describes how people are being labelled as they are tracked, year on year, prior to year 11. Such information could be meaningfully compared with their outcomes by the December following their year 11 to gain some insight into if, when and how records indicate that the situation is going wrong for them in school.

Following several meetings, interviews and email correspondences over a full sixteen months period with a range of professionals who are involved either directly or indirectly in collating, organising, managing and sharing statistical data about students in and around NEET, we gradually extrapolated that:

The characteristics of the tracking systems applied by individual schools, by Connexions and by Manchester City Council were not necessarily identical

Some - but not all - of the characteristics for those who appear on most –but not all – of the schools' registers within the geographical area, could be made visible to us at the Central Collegiate, rather than individual school, level

Young people who, according to their birth date, belong to a specific academic year cohort, would not appear on their school year's database at all if they had become permanently excluded by that school during that academic year - but before its end - or if, for some other reason, they were no longer on that school's register by the academic year end

¹⁶Tunnard, J. with Barnes T. and Flood S. (2008) ONE IN TEN. Key messages from policy, research and practice about young people who are NEET. Research in Practice: www.rip.org.uk ISBN 978-904984-28-2: 17

The visible categories could help to illuminate some understanding about how people were being labelled statistically both in year 11, and in the years leading up to year 11

Currently, there is no information in the public domain that describes the processes used to construct the database values for the Manchester Central Collegiate meta-dataset (school census data) i.e. how the data from each school becomes integrated into the meta-dataset

Appendix 1 specifies the first set of data that we requested from statisticians in Manchester City Council Education Department and Connexions. We were finally enabled access to Manchester Central Collegiate Client Destinations listing as at 18.12.08 – young people who were in year 11 in July 2008. Our analysis of that dataset follows.

Manchester Central Collegiate Client destinations dataset as at 18.12.08

Within Connexions, the concept of NEET began to be operationalised statistically in 2003. Their database for Manchester Central Collegiate was accessed to us. It includes core fields that have been designed using a bespoke software whose designers advise would need two years to change. At the time of this research, (2008-2012) this software was currently under contract to Manchester City Council and was going out to competitive tender from 2012 onwards.

Preliminary commentary about the categories that were analysed

Five categories were analysed and, where appropriate, cross tabulated.

NEET or related category

Pupils who would be in year 11 but who had been permanently excluded or otherwise removed from the school register before the end of that school year, do not appear anywhere in the dataset. With that codicil in mind, in addition to the NEET category itself, out of all the possible intended destinations that do appear, we identified three other categories used by CCIS¹⁷ that could be indicating a pupil who was actually NEET: Cannot be Contacted, Destination Not Known, Dormant.

Ethnicity

At the moment, the ethnic monitoring categories in the bespoke software used by CCIS are too broad for the purposes of this study: the categories to which people from Somalia should be allocated are Black African or Black Background, and these are categories which include those from many other origins. The Local Authority though, does use an extended list which breaks down the categories further. According to our copy of a list of the ethnicity codes in the CMIS facility system that is used by one school in the Central Collegiate area, there are 30 ethnicity categories available, including Somali.

¹⁷ CCIS is an Operational and Technical Framework for the delivery of Connexions Services. Department for Children Schools and Families (2008) Client Caseload Information System. CCIS Requirement 2008-9. January 2008. CCIS Requirement v1.2 25-02-08. HMSO

In order to establish how many Somali identified students from our cohort were in – or around – NEET, we approached the Local Authority for access to suitably anonymised and unrelated (i.e. no names, DOB's, student identifier numbers, or school names etc) copies of the datasets they used to construct the meta-dataset that we had been given. *Instead, they analysed that school census dataset themselves and identified a single Somali pupil as NEET.* We then asked for a description of the process that was used to either construct or subsequently analyse the meta-dataset from across the schools that had found this single Somali NEET pupil. This was not shared.

Making no reference to any information about either the 'ethnicity' or the 'intended destination' category already applied to any student within the dataset, Eritrean Ethiopian and Somali researchers analysed the surnames only. We were looking for national identities, by name. This preliminary analysis established that there were no exclusively Eritrean or Ethiopian names in the dataset and so we redefined the study parameters at that time to concentrate on Somali young people.

However, out of all the possible ethnic categories in the dataset that was accessible to us we identified six that could be indicating a Somali pupil: African, Black African, No information, Other, Other black background, Other mixed background.

Gender

Self explanatory.

Target Group and Target Group Start Date

Through the use of Fair Processing Forms, Connexions allocate each student a baseline position at one of three levels of support:

Level 3 – minimum support needed

Level 2 – some support required

Level 1 – need intensive support (one criterion of which is likelihood of becoming NEET)

In the category of the dataset that is called the Target Group, one of these three levels is specified for each pupil. This category was included in our statistical analysis, as was the Target Group start date, which indicates when any target group was first applied to the student, i.e. when their Fair Processing Form is recorded as having first been completed.

Ethnicity by NEET Results

Table 1: Cross tabulations on students who are/may be NEET and are/may be Somali, Eritrean or Ethiopian and who appear on Manchester Central Collegiate Client destinations listing as at 18.12.08

Category Ethnicity	<i>NEET</i>	<i>Cannot be Contacted</i>	<i>Destination Not Known</i>	Totals
<i>African</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Black African</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>No information</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Other</i>	<i>1</i>		<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Other black background</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Other mixed background</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>
Totals	6	3	22	31

Table 1 reveals that up to six, or almost 20% of the young people who could be Somali have been labelled as NEET, and up to a further 25 may be NEET. It also reveals that just over half (n=16) who may be NEET have not been allocated any ethnicity at all. We can only assume that this reflects missing values in the original datasets. Further, the destinations of 71% (22/31) are not known and, of those young people, 50% (11/22) fall into the ‘No information’ ethnicity category.

Gender by NEET Results

Table 2: Cross tabulations on students who are/may be NEET by gender and who appear on Manchester Central Collegiate Client destinations listing as at 18.12.08

Category Gender	<i>NEET</i>	<i>Cannot be Contacted</i>	<i>Destination Not Known</i>	Totals
<i>Female</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Male</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Unknown</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>8</i>
Totals	6	3	22	31

There are more girls (n=12) than boys (n=11) who could be Somali and could be NEET. Of the young people who could be NEET, 25% (8/31) are recorded as gender unknown.

Gender by Ethnicity Results

Table 3: Cross tabulations on students who may be Somali, Eritrean or Ethiopian by gender who appear on Manchester Central Collegiate Client destinations listing as at 18.12.08

Gender Ethnicity	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	Totals
<i>African</i>	2	2	0	4
<i>Black African</i>	1	0	0	1
<i>No information</i>	5	3	8	16
<i>Other</i>	0	4	0	4
<i>Other black background</i>	2	1	0	3
<i>Other mixed background</i>	2	1	0	3
Totals	12	11	8	31

Of the young people who could be Somali and could be NEET, 25% (8/31) have neither gender nor ethnicity recorded.

Target Group by NEET Results

Table 4: Cross tabulations on students who are/may be NEET by Target Group who appear on Manchester Central Collegiate Client destinations listing as at 18.12.08

Category Target Group	<i>NEET</i>	<i>Cannot be Contacted</i>	<i>Destination Not Known</i>	Totals
<i>Minimum Intervention</i>	1	1	12	14
<i>Supported</i>	3	2	4	9
<i>Intensive support</i>	2	0	6	8
Totals	6	3	22	31

Of the young people clearly identified as being NEET, who are 19% (6/31) of the total, a single person became NEET following minimum intervention. However, a further 38% (12/31) who received minimum intervention have ended up with an unknown destination category as have a further 19% (6/31) who received Intensive Support.

Target Group Start Date by NEET Results

Table 5: Cross tabulations on students who are/may be NEET by Target Group Start Date and who appear on Manchester Central Collegiate Client destinations listing as at 18.12.08

Category Target group start date	<i>NEET</i>	<i>Cannot be Contacted</i>	<i>Destination Not Known</i>	Totals
2003	1	0	3	4
2005	0	1	8	9
2006	0	1	1	2
2007	1	1	4	6
2008	4	0	6	10
Totals	6	3	22	31

Of the students who are/may be NEET, 33%(10/31) were only allocated a Target Group in their year 11. This may be indicating students who joined their school during the course of that final year, or it may be indicating when the Fair Processing Form was actually completed for that student. From the dataset, it would appear that none of 2008's year 11's were allocated a target group in 2004, and that 50%(11/22) of the young people whose destinations are not known were Fair Processed by their Year 8 (2005).

Target Group Start Date by Target Group Results

Table 6: Cross tabulations of students who are/may be NEET by their Target Group Start Date and their Target Group who appear on Manchester Central Collegiate Client destinations listing as at 18.12.08

Target group Target group start date	<i>Minimum Intervention</i>	<i>Supported</i>	<i>Intensive support</i>	Totals
2003	4	0	0	4
2005	7	2	0	9
2006	1	1	0	2
2007	1	4	1	6
2008	1	2	7	10
Totals	14	9	8	31

25%(8/31) of our 'are/may be NEET' cohort were identified as needing intensive support in either their penultimate(n=1) or ultimate(n=7) year. A further 45%(14/31) were placed in the minimum intervention group. However, of these, only 21% (3/14) were so targeted from 2006 onwards. The numbers are very small, but it may be indicating an increasing tendency over time, on the part of Advisors, to allocate some

form of support, especially when set beside the 23%(7/31) of the cohort who are allocated Intensive Support during the year 2008.

What cannot be seen

One of the emergent issues is that, as well as having different ways of organising their pupil data individual schools, Connexions and Manchester City Council also have different codes of practice around sharing data. A school may have a dataset that indicates who is from Somalia, and also who has been temporarily or permanently excluded or persistently absent year on year. However, we have been unable to obtain any clear and practical guidance about the extent to which that school may be bound to communicate this information, in this form, to either the City Council or Connexions.

We were advised, on the one hand, that it was ‘Not our data so cannot share’¹⁸, but on the other that, ‘for Local Authorities, if children are removed they [the school] don’t have to tell us. But that gives us a difficulty if they don’t tell us - unless they appear through an admissions request. Their line is they just don’t have to.’¹⁹

The Manchester City Council division for Exclusion and Education Otherwise Unit explained to us that:

‘having accurate data – very difficult. Communication needed with agencies who know children exist. [We] don’t hear a lot from Community Based Organisations. Schools do refer if they have lost a child. Referrals through all different agencies including Health Services, Connexions. Liaison with the Border and Immigration Agency has just begun this year. Children Missing Education meets regularly with the UK Border Agency regarding newly dispersed arrivals.’²⁰

Appendix 2 is the statistical information that we formally requested from the Manchester City Council division for Exclusion and Education Otherwise, which includes the Children Missing Education Unit. We made this request once we established that:

Excluded children are not on the schools datasets.
Once they have exhausted their own attempts - which include home visits - schools contact the Children Missing from Education (CME) about persistently absent children.

Adding in this information would, we believe, create a more complete dataset of the young people from the Central Collegiate 2008 year 11 cohort. The division observed to us, in writing, that:

¹⁸...’ indicates verbatim data that were contemporaneously noted during from face to face meetings with staff from the Manchester City Council division for Exclusion and Education Otherwise, or during telephone interviews with senior schools staff.

¹⁹ditto

²⁰ditto

the school history (i.e. permanent exclusions and subsequent educational provision) of every permanently excluded pupil from each of the schools over the 5 year period during which Yr 11 pupils (07/08) were in high school? i.e. all those that would have been in that cohort had they not been excluded. If so this is a very big job covering and cross referencing about 700 pupil records over 5 years.

However, ultimately this data could not be made available to us. Staff described difficulties around tracking children new to the patch that is bound up with an overall lack of clarity about where statutory obligations to inform and intervene actually reside. This may be a crucial issue in relation to Somali young people in the Central Collegiate area. One of the schools described to us:

‘there are between 25-30 pupils moving in and out each year. The big bulk are Somali, Eritrean, Ethiopian and West African and the problem with that cohort is that only 42% of year 11’s last year were present in year 7.... Over 50% of the 6th form are looked after children (n=72) [We are] taking the full time option for reducing NEETS.’²¹

Since the beginning of this research process, the division has re-issued legal guidance to the schools regarding schools attendance but we were unable to ascertain exactly why they felt the need to re-issue that guidance.

Ultimately our enquiries failed to elicit the information that we needed in order for this research to offer a robust statistical baseline. The most contemporary information²² we have is that the exclusions policy is in line with DCSF 2008 Guidance²³. However, an ongoing review of internal procedures for managing, reporting and tracking exclusions at school district and LA level, known as the Integrated Admissions Review, was supposed to be communicating its revised protocols during the 2009-2012 academic year and in time for September 2012.

We trust that our findings enable any review processes that occur in the future.

²¹ Verbatim data that were contemporaneously noted during a telephone interview with a senior staff member

²² December 2009

²³ Department for Children Schools and Families (2008) *Improving behaviour and attendance: guidance on exclusion from schools and pupil referral units*. DCSF Publications: Nottingham. September ISBN: 978-1-84775-160-7

Practitioners' Perspectives

Background information about the system in practice

Partnership Agreements are the core basis of Connexions work in schools²⁴. However, in this study, none of the front line practitioners, known as personal Advisors (PA's) made reference to those agreements which may indicate that, on the day to day, these partnerships are not a regular source of reference.

Theoretically, through Fair Processing forms completed in Year 8 at school, Connexions allocate each student a baseline position at one of three levels of support:

- Level 3 – minimum support needed
- Level 2 – some support required
- Level 1 – need intensive support (one criterion of which is likelihood of becoming NEET)

This process is called the Connexions Priority Grid.

However, not all students are Fair Processed in Year 8: they may not be present in Year 8 and only arrive at the school later; they may be absent or sick when Fair Processing takes place. These students default to Level 3 until such time as further information is obtained, or they meet a Connexions PA. This can take place any time between Year 9 and the beginning of Year 11. At this time, previously fixed support levels can be amended and students who were not Fair Processed originally are allocated their support level.

The process of constructing Priority Grids is led by the lead PA from Connexions who liaises with school staff to complete one Priority Grid per student that identifies the needs of that student.

The findings that are presented below derive from the interviews and focus groups with the full range of practitioners. Their observations are not confined to what they do in relation to Somali students. They describe what they do in relation to students perceived to be at risk of NEET per se, and they include specific observations made about Somali students.

The software that practitioners use

The COREPLUS software currently in use by PAs in schools is supplied by Career Vision. This provision is under contract to Manchester City Council and, at the time of this research, was supposed to be going out to competitive tender from 2012 onwards.

The database does not break down ethnicity and the core fields are difficult to challenge/change because it is bespoke software.

It is better than Profile. Remember Profile?

²⁴ Francis R (2003) *The characteristics of an effective Partnership Agreement*. Connexions. Accessed at www.cegnet.co.uk/resource/content/files/266.doc

I find the system okay, user friendly.

Practitioners' access to the software

Practitioners' access to COREPLUS in the school setting is very varied:

In school there is no access to the database. Both school and Connexions are reluctant.

No access to our database in the school setting [unless] we take a laptop in school. We've got a laptop we take in.

We all can access CORE – for at least the last three years. We also have access to a laptop.

COREPLUS is not always functioning well in school:

CORE. It helps having it in school but often - it is a technical thing - they will crash quite a lot and they are slow. At Connexions it's quick.

Reports of access to CORE vary from very limited to highly accessible and, as a result, the extent to which that access can shape working practices is also varied. Some practitioners who have full access are always up-to-date with their action plans while others:

Would love to have CORE in school. That would make it so much simpler. There is reams of stuff that doesn't go on the system.

I have a note book that I carry around ... Anytime a young person wants to tell me something, I take name of the young person, the date of birth and then the issues. They tell me the issues ... I quickly go back to the office and load them in [to COREPLUS] .

A shame that's how the system is in school, because you often see people who you've seen before, and you don't quite remember what they said. You have notes and copies that you have made, but it's not as comprehensive as the system. I often find myself ringing the office for somebody at the office to check the system to see what they said beforehand. But, like the others, I have a notepad and input it later. But if I could input there and then with the young person it would be a lot easier, but it's notes basically.

I have 23 action plans currently that need inputting. Having the database in school would reduce the 5-6 hours per week spent clearing the backlog.

Physical workspace in the school setting

Most PA's did not raise the issue of their working space in schools. Indeed during the process of validating this data with practitioners it was emphasised that, for some, there is no issue around adequate physical working space. However, for two staff, the description of a space issue in a new build school is remarkable:

In the old school we had room, but in the new building we weren't taken into consideration... But we made a noise out of it. Because the young people need a room to be seen in from September till January. Because we are talking so loud they made sure we were outside.

Question: what do you mean outside?

The corridor - so there is no confidentiality. But some times we make a noise and they say we can share a room. But when we share a room there are two staff there

How and when practitioners create data about young people around NEET

In Manchester, each high school has a NEET Prevention Plan which details the specific actions schools will take prevent to NEET. It is part of a very systematic approach which has received praise nationally: PAs attend parents evenings and careers events from year 9 onwards, advise about option choices, identify level 1s from year 9 onwards, take referrals by the schools and, in the summer of year 10, start targeting these students for individual interviews.

However, hands on practitioners who contributed to this study did not describe any recent form of *systematic* intervention with students before year 11. This may be partly bound up in the fact that the question of who is at risk of becoming NEET is not a specific question that Connexions staff ask of the school. Rather they base the decision as to whether a young person is likely to become NEET on the picture that is building about that pupil, the difficulties they are having, their attendance, applications made etcetera. For some of the PA's though, they experience a gap between the theory of their activity which dictates that they should be systematically engaging with students before year 11, and their actual practice:

In practice, Year 11 is what is focussed on, though they will become at risk of NEET sooner. In theory we are alerted to them - in practice we aren't.

Theoretically we are making interventions but, in practice, we will get young people signaled and will work with Intensive Support.

This gap between theory and practice becomes more visible when practitioners dedicated to Children Missing from Education share their perspective about what happens to their information when a child previously missing from education is allocated to a new school:

Any new young person in years 9, 10 and 11: the [CME] list goes to Connexions for allocation to a PA [Personal Advisor].

This description contradicts that of schools based PA's:

We found out that we weren't being told if young people were being taken off roles and young people come on. And that's been really difficult.

Ideally, information is gathered on school systems: Year 9 (November), Year 10 and Year 11. And it is updated annually. But in practice we don't get data from Years 9 and 10. We get master lists for Year 8-11 and lists from the LEA, and we cross reference with the Connexions list.

How young people are 'signaled' as a priority

Apart from a couple of exceptions presented below, practitioners who are PA's describe young people being referred to them for Intensive Support, in year 11, and if they have been defined as Level 1 through the Priority Grid process.

The understanding of some practitioners is that the Priority Grid process:

Relies on information that is provided by the schools. The assessment is not independent.

For others though, sources of information can include:

Previous contact with the young person, knowledge of the family through siblings and other sources e.g. LAC list, CSE meetings, MARAC list

Similarly, while for some the information that informs the Priority Grid is:

All based on the school information. It is not from the young person's perspective.

For others the Priority Grid is just a starting point for highlighting students who would benefit from additional support. Students can self refer and, when seen, can provide information which could mean no longer being level 1 or level 2.

Further, while the experience of some practitioners is that, in order to be a student with a Priority Grid, the student needs to be present at the beginning of academic year:

I think, with the Somali students, I might not necessarily know if they are in school, because we do the grid at the beginning of the academic year. If they are not there then they are not on the grid.

Question: And if they join after the beginning of term?

Then we would not have them on the grid.

For others, the grid does not rely on the pupil being present. It is produced from information given to the PA from numerous sources and is then built on throughout the year, as and when the situation changes and through the PA meeting regularly with the appropriate staff for updates.

In addition, students who have either been temporarily excluded or absent for long periods in previous years will not necessarily be seen prior to Year 11, even if they have already been allocated a Level 1:

The ones who are level 1 in year 10. I mean it's a luxury if you got the time and everybody else is sorted out. We just go over and say hello once the Priority Grid is done.

At the beginning of term we would want to see them [students previously allocated Level 1] any way, because we see all the year 11.

In one instance a PA describes being approached by the person in the school who is:

PA: In charge of absentees and truanting.

Question: A dedicated person?

PA: Yes. She actually gives me, like two names in year 10, she wrote to me because one of the teachers said: "If you want help contact him". So she wrote to me. So I went to talk with them and went to the review.

Question: So are they excluded?

PA: No they are not excluded, they are 'Year 10, not attending'.

Question: So it's an intervention now?

PA: So the teacher requested I help them, even though I only deal with year 11.

Two of the practitioners describe how, once they realised that they were not automatically being alerted about temporary exclusion, absenteeism, departure and new arrival, they initiated intervention:

PA1: We had to then request details of any new students that have joined or left.

PA2: We did try and ask for information on people who had been excluded or absent for long times but that's not started happening yet.

Question: So you don't have a way through to them at the moment?

PA1: No, not if they haven't been referred to us..... And then we start introducing ourselves to the year 10 that we know.

These practitioners also describe another intervention tactic:

What I usually do is, we've got a form called Personal Advisory Form which is very comprehensive. We use this. Give to the teachers for them to fill and tell me what support that young person needs.... and if they don't complete that form I tell them "Sorry I cannot help that young person." And it does work. Because they know they need me and if they won't guide me I won't guide any young people. So - that's the way. Luckily for me I always get my way. Sometimes it was incomplete so I would go back and say "Have you spoken to the young person about this referral?" - to see if that young person agrees or not. And they have to take it back to the young person to agree.

We usually go to the form tutor and ask what help is this person given. And because of our interference they put in support. Because personally, when I meet a young person and he explains to me their problem I always go to a form tutor to see if they [the student] has told them [the form tutor].

During 2009, PA's describe an increase in the number of students who are being allocated Level 1 and account for it as follows:

Now there are more categories than before. If three or more categories are being ticked then it is immediately becoming 'Intensive Support'. That is a change for this year. They would have been in the second group previously. Also issues about Levels. According to attendance, it used to be under 50% was level 1 – now it is under 85%.

Some describe this increase as difficult for them to deal with:

A problem seeing level 1's this year. There is 25 compared to 10-15 in year 11 last year. That's a lot compared to last year and Priority Grids have changed.

What practitioners do in Year 11 with students allocated Level 1

Using a CAF(Common Assessment Framework) and a APIR (Assessment to Plan Implement and Review) Wheel assessment tool, a Personal Action Plan is developed with Level 1 students. However, when practitioners meet them:

Often Level 1 have not done it. We might see them two or three times to do it and it may be a very low key action plan because they cannot read.

Once they complete this [CAF or APIR] they are on the system [COREPLUS]. They have a referral tab.

PA's describe a range of intensive activity with Level 1 students that can take place during year 11:

Try to get them back into school, find out what the issues are, get guidance interviews with Connexions, look at support services.

And this may include the application of an additional tool, the Manchester Assessment Tool 16+ for substances:

Very common with Level 1's. Lots of cannabis use.

The PA's are very aware of the need to make contact with these students during Year 11. If students are not in school during year 11:

You use detective work: phone, book appointments in the office, make home visits, check siblings, write to the family. The minimum requirement on those you can't reach is phone calls, letters and three home visits.

From the perspective of Children Missing from Education(CME), schools contact them when they have exhausted their own attempts:

Schools do refer [to us] if they have lost a child. Children, off the school register and not registered elsewhere, inform CME after 20 days. Sometimes they are moving out of the area, or they are on the waiting list for another school. Schools phone up on a regular basis on what to do about children not in school. Referrals come through all different agencies including Health Services and Connexions. CME meets regularly with the United Kingdom Border Agency regarding newly dispersed arrivals.

However, for CME:

Having accurate data is very difficult. Communication is needed with agencies who know the children exist. For Local Authorities, if children are removed they [th school] don't have to tell us, but that gives us a difficulty if they don't tell us, unless they appear through an admissions request. Their [the school's] line is they just don't have to.

From July in year 11 through to November after Year 11

In the November following the end of year 11, Connexions produces an Intended Destinations dataset. This dataset, for 2008's Year 11 Central Collegiate cohort, forms the basis of our statistical analysis.

Practitioners raised a number of aspects to their work that informs the Intended Destination dataset. Firstly, the initial information that is used to describe the student's intended destination is collected when Connexions go through the students' career options with them in school:

But that isn't definite, because people can change their intended destinations. It's interesting.

Once Year 11 school is out, if they are finding difficulties in reaching students to establish their intended destinations, practitioners seem to be targeting those students who have previously scored Level 1 on their Priority Grids:

Intended destination data acquired through face to face contact doesn't always achieve 100% coverage, so those appearing on the Priority Grids would be first.

When GSCE results are published some PA's attend:

Go and stand there [outside the school area where results are posted] with our names, and when the young person comes out we ask them: "Where they are going?" "What college?" "What are their results?" And at that time, as we are writing, some of them escape, so we have to follow them.

We usually ask the young people, "What are your plans?" And, in there, they give us their latest telephone number. So, sometimes... if you don't catch

them to give you their new telephone number, their old one might be old and you will not be able to catch up with them. So that was another act which was put in place.

PA's also describe using preliminary information about intended destinations and cross referencing that with confirmed information from Colleges about whether people have actually registered there:

If they said "College" that would appear on the system. And if they don't follow through with the college you see what they intended and that's when you use it[the information].

Word of mouth of the young person isn't good enough, because they might say, "Yes I'm just off to enroll into X to do hair dressing" and they might not ever get there. So you will notice that when the list comes through. You see they haven't enrolled there so you have to see where they are. So, for destination purposes, actually, the word of mouth of the young person isn't good enough.

PA's also analyse college data about early leavers:

We get lists of early leavers. College gives as they leave. Sends out a list and gives it to the PA for the college. This is forwarded to the Powerhouse and the letters are sent out for follow through.

They are continuously updating their personal records of students, and seeking students out, until November:

Throughout the summer we are constantly trying to contact year 11's – for 4 months...phone calls, emails, texts, letters, home visits, being there on GCSE day.

If I met a young person who we were chasing because, I don't know, they said they were going to college and they haven't turned up on the college list. What we do then is we have to knock on very single door in every single case.

According to our system, it is the adviser from school, they have to chase it up until November. From September we have a list which is given to us by the school which means we have to ring each one of them to find out where they are.

If they are able to make direct contact with the students:

We can say "We saw what your intended destination was, it was hair dressing. Have you changed your mind or do you still want to do that?" So we would use that as a starting point for the next stage. It might be that they have changed their minds that they just didn't turn up at college.

Some PA's describe how they use their individual knowledge about the language needs of particular students and seek them out in first term, in the college setting:

Certain people will have trouble with language and so on. You can look out for them in the college and you can follow them through and make sure things are okay with the course. At least we have that system.

If students cannot be contacted, PA's use a 'faster tracking' approach:

"And then it is up to three home visits. You know about it. You work with another agency. You exhaust all avenues. But sometimes you go to houses and they have disappeared. Less than ten students. Then you ring up the centre to help us find people. We have a NEET seeking partnership arrangement with the Job Centre. They[students] should be coming to Connexions to get the slip for job search.

If PA's have tried everything but been unable to reach a particular student:

They become part of the 'unknown' as a destination category.

In November, if PA's still have Year 11 students they haven't been able to reach, or there is still no next firm step in place

"That's all drawn down from the system and counted up".

These school based PA's do not directly interface with any other professional about the missing students:

We chase that young person until we find them, and if we can't find them they are passed on to the post 16 people. And you just keep chasing them until you find them. They go into a tracking system. Because we have to track them until their 20th birthday. We just hound them.

However:

"Nothing gets back to me personally – get a pie chart for the year cohort."

Perceived language and literacy needs

Across the interviews and focus groups an emergent theme related to PA's observations about the significance of language and literacy skills for Somali young people and their families. When English is not the mother tongue, for both students and parents:

One of the frustrations is that they are academically bright but their knowledge of the English language is letting them down.

They are kind of lost in the back of the class room because they don't speak the language... the kids come back to me time after time struggling in the back of the classroom saying they don't understand.

Parents don't speak English. I suggest that the adults get education.... I think because they don't know the language they feel lost in this big system.

Lack of English language impacts on the connectedness that both students and parents feel with the school:

A lot of them [students] give me the impression that they feel isolated they feel devalued they are not getting anything out of the system. It's not working for them.

When I see Somali families at X they look apprehensive or nervous about being there at parent evenings.And what they do is often have a neighbour or friend who does speak English, translate. ...But I can see distinctly in their eyes that they feel discomfort at this unfamiliarity with the system and language. And I think the whole experience of coming to see us is overwhelming. It's not conducive to making them feel comfortable, safe, welcomed.

School responses to this communication barrier vary. Some are considered insufficient:

One to one support, there isn't enough of it. Because the staff aren't trained, or able, or financed to give that kind of support.

It is up to the school to employ a support teacher. EMAS. EMAS no longer send out support.

What they really need in the school is a full-time ESOL alongside the curriculum.No set person dealing with ESOL at school.

In other schools, Connexions staff pick up the issue and check responses to it:

I always get it from the kids when we start discussing. I notice the difficulty they have in understanding the English. That is when I ask them how long they have been in the country. When they tell me, I ask them "Have they had any support from the school?" Most of them tell me they have support.... a designated worker who helps in the lessons as a second support. I always ask who that person gets as a support and if they are happy. That's the way I work, because sometimes the young person doesn't understand the language... then they don't understand anything in lessons. That's the road I always start with.

In some instances there is immediate and automatic intervention on the part of the school, in collaboration with Connexions:

We actually identify what level of support they need in X. If English isn't the first language of the young person they're automatically put on... a list of young people whose English is a second language.... so they are assessed in school to see what their support need is.

Communication between parent and child

This final section of the findings about practitioners' perspectives, presents some views about the impact of the quality of communication between students and parents within families. Practitioners feel that this intra-family communication is important for understanding how the parents perceive the work being done in the schools. Some practitioners describe review meetings with parents as helpful:

When they come to review, some parents are always pointing the finger at the school. Not listening to whose fault it is. Because I have attended so many reviews. The problem always comes from the young person. But the young person will not tell the parents the truth until the review. And everything is put on the table and then the parents know 'Yes, the school have put something in place.'

But, for others, involving the family can prove problematic:

When the families come in that young person looks nervous. Because the interview is for the young person and sometimes they do not want the families to know to what they have disclosed to us.

In once instance, involving the family in a review was felt to be intensely counter-productive:

The young man walked out because he did not agree with what we they doing or what the mother was saying. The person taking the meeting, conducting the meeting should have put a stop to what they... what she was saying. But they didn't. So the boy just walked out and we couldn't bring him back.

For some, rather than review meetings with parents, a different approach to working with the families to address the problems that may mean that a young person is becoming at risk of NEET would be very welcome:

Sometimes the young people have something they want to disclose to us which are separate. Which they don't want the family to know. And when the family come, they have a different view of what they want the young person to be. But that's not what the young person wants. And then you have a clash in the interview and sometimes that is very hard for the young person. So I don't know if what you're doing can...

If the family is involved [in school] they will know more of what going in the young person's life at school. Whether this person is coping or not coping, how to go about it and address it, and [how to] go to the school. Instead of that confrontational approach.

Parents' Perspectives

How teachers treat their children

You send the children into school. ..The adult people should look after the children nicely. But this school they don't look after the children nicely they treat like soldiers or prisoners.

Question: What do they do?

They do anything - there isn't anything they won't do. They shouting at the children. Yabashdj sakdhsjbdjsa bdsjadjsahdsa . The child is not like that: "You naughty, you this, you that". They are confusing them, confusing the children. Many times I seen them, how many teacher I see them do this? Some teacher I see them do this four or five times. (*Father, tape recorded interview, own home*)

The Headmaster said...all of these other brothers I hate them and I don't want those brothers here..... (*Mother, fully noted interview, own home*)

"Through the education way, they confusing the children. They making them panic. They have power and they get the money and the building they get the facility for the children all that. That's what they do, they don't want the children to be educated and get a job." (*Father, tape recorded interview, own home*)

Written communication between parents and the schools

I would go to the school. They would send a letter. Someone would read that letter for me. (*Mother, fully noted interview, own home*)

There was never an interpreter available at meetings and no letters were ever written in Somali. (*Mother2, fully noted interview, own home*)

Sometimes is two or three letters coming in the same day. Three different teachers complaining about X. A year after, one year after [he started], from that day letter complain never stopped. (*Father, tape recorded interview, own home*)

Communication between parents and children

And when he comes home and then I show him all the letters. Know what happens? He say "It's not my fault. They accusing me, everything." At the end of the day, ignore it, because he put me to much pressure. Then I say "Well what the name of teacher? I go to see them." (*Father, tape recorded interview, own home*)

My son feels really terrible. That time, he used to tell me, it is not your fault. Now I understand. I realise that there is something.
(*Mother2, fully noted interview, own home*)

He talking differently, do you know what I mean. Yea, this and that and this. You know that language? I can't even understand it myself. (*Father, tape recorded interview, own home*)

Soon as he wake up he never going his mother's home. When he wake up and make snack, toast and tea rushing to the door. By the time he come back whole family asleep. And we don't know where he been all night and all day. (*Father, tape recorded interview, own home*)

Interaction with school staff

Anytime I went they not tell me good things. They always accusing the boy of this and that.

Question: Did they talk about how they can help the child?

No.

Question: Or how you can help the child?

No they never tell. All they tell is "tell your boy don't do this; tell your boy don't do that." At the end of the day, once, when we been a good few times, so many times bad, I argue with them, myself, all the time. "Okay. If I tell my child 'Don't do this, don't do that', who tell your teacher "Don't do this to the boy"? And when I say these words they flare up. (*Father, tape recorded interview, own home*)

Never missed a parents evening. When I came back from the meeting my head is exploding. Something is wrong and I can't fix it. (*Mother, fully noted interview, own home*)

When I go to the high school all the teachers show me a good face but behind me they have a bad face. (*Mother2, fully noted interview, own home*)

In the end they say when I come in, they don't want to see me. ...they say "That teacher? No, no, it's not available, not today. It's not this, it's not that..."

Question: So it's even difficult to see the teachers?

Very hard to see them. (*Father, tape recorded interview, own home*)

Becoming excluded

From year ten everything dropped down – he was the same person but the results bad and the attendance was bad. By that time, I had come in 2000, it was 2007 and I had been to different colleges to learn English.

Question: Why did this happen?

The school - the teachers...excluded from school many times. After 5 days or fewer – temporary – never permanently excluded, for arguing with the teacher and not following the rules. (*Mother, fully noted interview, own home*)

One day my son was excluded for 4 weeks and he was doing a science exam. I asked them if he could come for the exam but they refused to accept that he should be there. (*Mother2, fully noted interview, own home*)

He gained nothing

Question: So did he finish school last July?

Yes July

Question: So when he finished in July did the school get in touch with him afterwards?

Yea they say coming - what you call - sixth form. They send a letter, an application. They got a sixth form, 16 -18. And I said “No, you not going.” (*Father, tape recorded interview, own home*)

Interaction with Connexions

[After a child had failed all his GCSE's] Connexions they send application form for apprenticeship or something. I fill in them and send both of them, nothing come back. They say you hearing from somebody...They never coming back. Two of them I filling in, then I go to them 3 or 4 times. (*Father, tape recorded interview, own home*)

I take my lad and another lad and another lad and they don't give you nothing. But they talking to you, “Yes, yes, we call you, we do”. By the time you're gone they don't want to know you, as soon as you left the block. (*Father, tape recorded interview, own home*)

Seeking outside help

If they go to the Powerhouse there is trouble between the Somalis and the Afro Caribbeans. So we won't allow them to go. They even have a library. It is across the road from where I live but I don't go. It is always intimidating. It feels not comfortable to go, the youths that are around. I go to the public library instead. (*Mother2, fully noted interview, own home*)

And then I go see the councillor X. She said "wait for me I write letter to them". So I say OK, she wrote letter to them. They never answered me. They never answered her back. Four weeks after I go back to her. She say she got no answer at all, so she does another letter.

Nothing come back, go back again. She says "they answer this letter or I go visit the school". Third letter they answer it. About my son and me. They say I am a bully, and [my son] he ignore us, this and that. I don't know. ..Yea they answered back through the councillor, to the councillor. The councillor calls me. She read the letter, give me a copy of the letter and that's what they said. And she said she can't do nothing, anymore than that.

Question: So the letter you got back said you were a bully. What did it say about your son?

Well I know son is not bully, and I no bully, but I talking my rights and they not want that.

(*Father, fully noted interview, own home*)

[I ask another parent- mother] "What you think? We can organise parents making complaints about the school, how they treating the children? The way find out is very very bad." She say "Come back that day." I come back that day and she busy again. The last day I went she said "No, no, I won't come with you."

I tried to organise it good. I contact them, three families at least, talking to three families and one of the guys when I explain to him he said to me: "How do you know the school bad?" "I have a word with the school, see it bad school, have a talking with the teacher how they treating "... But he just walk away. The other two don't give me answer." (*Father, tape recorded interview, own home*)

I send him back to Somalia. Is making good move for the future because he has no qualification from the school, college or sixth form He not do any good at all because of his background. Any school it asking and..... from that point he don't got a job or higher education so, what he going to do? Just messing about here with girls, drugs, thieving. He need to rest, right? By the time he going down that line it's very hard to come back can act in the community proper. What I like is he go there for two years to growing up. When he growing up. To moving this area or somewhere else and

when he comes back he is a man, to look after himself. Better off. (*Father, tape recorded interview, own home*)

Naming the problem

When you understand the things and you know what's going on you can help your child. But when you don't, you just sit down and don't know what to do. There are other boys, same school, same problem. I know four or five Somali families where boys don't have college and they have no good results. (*Mother2, fully noted interview, own home*)

I have never talked about this before or in a group to know where to get help.

There is nothing for mums: husbands are either dead, separated, have other wives ... some live together.

It is a different feeling here. There you hand the child over. That is not just Somalia but all over Africa. In Somali education, children are afraid of the teacher, to be reported to the parents. That is the norm.

We used to live in Holland and they never send them out – now they send them out. (*Mother, fully noted interview, own home*)

You know two Somalia boys, one is in dead and one is post-mortem. Last week, two weeks ago.”

Question: Yes from locally here. What do you know about?

I know one of them. I know one is dead but I don't know about the other one.

Question: How old are they?

One is 20 I think. But it's that kind of pressure that causes death.

Question: Guns?

No, knives.

Question: So these are the generation above your son?

Yea

Question: And they are the first?

They first coming when they were young.

Question: I know - when people came in the early nineties, these were the little ones. So let's talk about that a bit. What do you think is happening to them, the ones in their late 20's and 30's?

Well some of them really are doing a bit better. But the majority of them, they don't. Say 18 to 25, maybe 4 or 5% living a bit better. The rest them don't do nothing, hanging around messing about. (*Father, tape recorded interview, own home*)

Most Somali boys go down the wrong road. Somali girls go to school, do their thing. Girls are staying at home now - there is nothing else. (*Mother, fully noted interview, own home*)

Feeling is that everyone hates the Somali youth. They feel we are bombing ourselves. They expect you to be a terrorist. I think the Somalis are the most hated. (*Mother2, fully noted interview, own home*)

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Every Young Man

What surrounds us as we grow from children plays a big part in what happens to us as young men.

First of all, usually, we come to the UK with women, most often our mums but sometimes our aunts. When they come here, our mums and aunts do not read or write or speak anything in English. In fact, most of our mums and aunts do not read or write in Somali either.

Secondly, we are mostly living here without our dads, they don't live with us. Our mums are living on benefits and there are often a lot of smaller children around. Still, even if there are lots of people living in our houses, we know that we can make a quiet place to get a qualification... When we are on the streets though, around where we live, we see people who are making fast money. We see another person, two or three years older, with their chain on. Why can't I have it?

Thirdly, there are a lot of people out there who think that Islam is bad. They think because we are Muslim we could be terrorists. The police may know who we are and they can give us a hard life. Look at the Somalis now – we are black and we are Muslim – we are everything that people are told to hate. But, for us, there are rules about being a Muslim. We do not go to mosques very often now, but when we were children we went to Koran schools and we know about the preachings about goodness. We have the knowledge of this: “I won't give up on forgiving you, but you will give up on committing the sin.” Somali people have good hearts. At the same time, we come from the streets.

.....

Language

When we first arrive here we may have come straight from Somalia. One of us, who did just that, first lived in Somalia with his grandparents. He was smoking by the time he was 9 and drinking by age 11. But he is unusual for us in doing this so young. By the time he was 13 he was trilingual – three languages he could speak. He had lived long enough in three different countries to learn their languages before he even came to the UK. Now he can speak four languages. Most of us can speak at least two languages – Somali and English - and some of us speak Danish as well.

For all of us who were here when we were little, junior school was fine. It was fun and we still had that kiddish feeling when we moved up into High School. Some of us joined at High School and if we came then and we did not have any English language it was hard for us. There is compulsory English but one of us remembers being in an English class with higher level students and he could not do it and the teacher did not help him. He felt that they did not care.

Role Models

In all of our schools, there are Somali assistants but no Somali teachers. If you look around you to see what Somali people who are older than you are doing, you can end up using the wrong people as role models.

Some of us remember getting into mischief from year 7 – being the class clown and things like that. But we are clever boys and the expectations were high as we were in the top sets in years 7 and 8 and even in 9 and 10. We had potential.

Moving from Year 9 to Year 10

Some of us did put our heads down a bit in year 9. We had to think about options and what we wanted to do in the future exams. But, for a lot of us, we think that there is a big difference, too big a leap in learning, in what you are expected to know and how you are expected to work, between years 9 and 10. The coursework and everything, the pressure is on. We were unclear about whose responsibility was what. We did not know the seriousness of GCSE's and our schools did not make that really clear to us – the real importance of paper qualifications and what can happen if you end up without any.

By year 10 though, for most of us, we were starting to get into bits of trouble and to miss school days.

Classroom disruption

It is hard to learn in the classroom because of the disruption – but that is not just about Somali boys and it doesn't matter about the level, it is in all the levels of class. There are people in the class and they are not learning, they are disrupting. In some lessons, poor behaviour, the teachers didn't seem to care. In others, doing the same behaviour in front of another teacher and you would be reported. It would happen every day, sometimes fights in class and people throwing chairs. Teachers would get annoyed and then sometimes people would have to leave the lesson.

Some of us kept on going to our lessons and trying to learn and some of us started to get involved in fights in the classroom or in the school grounds. School was not offering extra support – maybe the School said about support but we did not hear it. We did not feel comfortable at school at this age. We felt not liked, that we were at a disadvantage. And we felt angry about that. Sometimes, that feeling of not being liked was conveyed to us through teachers. For those of us who asserted ourselves at those times, we got into conflict with the teachers. These would be low level conflicts, mostly verbal, sometimes slightly physical with male teachers.

Communicating with families about behaviour

Then letters came home. Mum can't read and so we would have to read them for her. Mum wants you to do well and you don't want to make her worried. So we could put a couple of lies in and she thinks they are writing to say we are alright, doing well. We didn't talk about what was actually happening in school with our mums. Not at all. We started getting short term exclusions and these could grow into longer ones.

Missing out on schooling

At the same time, around this age, year 10, we were becoming more aware of the drugs and crime that are around the outside of school. If you are sent outside of school, you see more of the streets. Then, you may start truanting. In year 10 many of us got sent to school everyday by our mums – but then we miss a day, different lessons every week and go to our friends' house... When you are truanting, at first it is supposed to be bad. Then you start seeing it as normal, when you are not getting caught. We see people older than us making money through illegal ways. We think "I can get into that". The fear of being arrested goes away. Some of us used to go out and meet girls, and go to houses and in parks and in town. No guns though, no one never touched a gun in school.

By this time, most of us were moving down the sets in school. For those of us who remember doing a Connexions interview, it happened in the first term of year 11. But they have seen 300 people before you, they are saying "Here's another one". One of us remembers telling the Connexions people at that time that he wanted to be lawyer, to go to college.

Another of us, in Year 11, who really got his head down and started going to lessons properly, found that because coursework hadn't been done it was getting hard. The teachers though were offering help to any student. Then, for giving attitude to teachers and getting into fights, he was regularly being called in to the office and his mum got called into meetings and got lectured. They would go home and his mum would be sad so he would keep his head down for a week and then come back out.

GCSE's

In about the March of his Year 11, he got told by the Head teacher to go on study leave, which meant go home and chill while everyone else is going in. There was him and three other Somali boys and this was in 2007. By the time the exams came he went into all his exams. He did between 8-11 papers. The highest he got was B. He got four GCSE's with very poor quality coursework.

Another of us, he messed up the GCSE's at the actual exams. He had studied, he was taking his exam - it was maths. Someone asked him something and he told them to shut up. There were 100 kids doing the exam. Then the supervisor saw him and "Get up and get out". At that moment he was told not to come back. The Head teacher, the Deputy Head and the exam supervisor were all outside the exam and they told him "Go home and don't bother coming back". He asked "what about the other exams?" They were all cancelled. He went home and his mum tried to contact but they weren't having any of it.

For some of us, if we were still going to school enough by the end of year 11, we still did very badly in our GCSE exams. Some of us who came out of school with no passes were like the ones who were stopped from doing their exams.

Moving from school to college

During the year after Year 11, without exams, some of us started hanging out on the streets, messing about more. One got arrested for fighting with a drunk racist in town. He had to go to Youth Offending Team. They call it stopping offending behaviour but all they do is see you and ask you “How has your week been?” Now he knows he should have kept his head screwed on at the time.

Some of us did start college after Year 11 but none of us were able to last. One of us got kicked out in the January after he started because of not enough attendance and being late. He had an argument with the head teacher and was told to go. Then he got a letter for an appointment with the head teacher and he signed a withdrawal. They said “We have had enough – the lates – we are going to kick you out, so it is better if you sign the withdrawal form rather than having to say we kicked you out.”

One of us who managed to stay on at college then got caught up with the police. He knows he made a lot of bad mistakes, got locked up for affray. The police harass him but he says it can't be harassment if he is giving them grief. It's petty stuff, stopping the car, stop and search, make a snide remark. Sometimes they knock on his door at home, at night, asking him about lads he knows. He says he is not really bothered but he knows he is being targeted.

For others of us the problem has been more about not being able to get on to the right course at college. If you get bad GCSE's then you can't do the course you want at college and they put you onto courses that they have places for, but not necessarily what you want. Even if it is what you want in the first place it can turn out not to be.

When one of us first came to Manchester he went to do ESOL at the college but then after three weeks he got jumped and stamped by a local gang in Moss Side. He already had three languages and he was interested to learn English. The teachers were meant to be doing Entry Level Two but they were really doing Level One. He felt sick, he felt he was going to punch his own face. He was sent to the office and they said that he could not come back but his dad came and explained that, in Denmark, they had found that he needed anger management and that had helped him in Denmark – they had never sent him out of the school when he was there. Here the college sent him to St Mary's Hospital. After a year he changed colleges. He started blazing like he had before. At this college he blazed and was stoned always... But now, he is out of everything. He is not smoking like before and he wants to achieve.

Now.... and the future

We all want to achieve. Trinity House, this a community place for youth. It is a place where we don't get hassle. Everyday it can help us to become a person who can talk about their life. It has helped us to try and find jobs, to stay off the streets, to be safe.

We want our minds to be more open to learn something. We are older and we have seen real shit and we don't want to drop down. When it comes to practical things some of us are very good – but we maybe are not very good at reading and writing at the moment. All our lives we can feel like we have been trying to study but something else comes up and then we are on the streets again....

Case Study
Somali Young man. 15 years old
Should be in year 11 during 2009-2012

May 2009, in his own words:

“I am 15. I live with my Auntie. Now, I am living in a three bedroomed house. There are three adults: auntie, her husband and my mum, and five children.

I came with my auntie and my brother and sister from Somalia. I was four. My auntie did not read or write in English at all when she came. Now, she is going to ESOL.

At aged 11 I went to *X Senior School* (in Manchester LA). Straightaway, in year 7, I was having problems in the classroom with the English and Jamaican children. The teacher blamed me. That year the school said that my auntie was keeping on taking me out of school.

I left that school and I went to *Y Senior School* (in neighbouring LA) a bit after the beginning of year 8. I was fighting in the classroom and in the playground. People would say names, calling me dumb, swearing.

Near the middle of year 9, the school said that if I stayed going to school they would have teachers and police watching me all the time. I could do that or I could go out of school. They said this.

Auntie had to sign a piece of paper saying I would leave the school and find another, this was maybe May in my year 9.

Auntie went back to *X Senior School*. I stayed at home.

That was until four months ago when my mother came. Then we started to try again and look for a school for me.

Mum does not speak English. Now auntie and uncle speak alright English. No one is working but they go to ESOL.

The school people at *X Senior School* say I am on waiting list and all I can do is wait.”

.....

When the auntie in this case was interviewed by the researchers she described how a local community worker who is Somali had gone to *X Senior School* with her nephew three or four times and had handed in an application. She told us that the community worker had told her that school reception staff took details and said they would be in touch - but they have not.

When we asked her if she kept any copies of these applications she said No. When we asked her for copies of any papers relating to the child’s school attendance she insisted that she had never received a letter saying in writing that her nephew could not go to school. She did recall receiving a document that described her nephew as

having told a teacher to shut up and his being caught fighting with other children and stealing a swipe card, but she could not find this document or any other papers from the school. She was insistent that she had never been told in writing that her nephew should leave the school. Instead she described how she was called to the school by phone, taken to the classroom where the child was, and told by a male Deputy Head teacher to take the child and remove him from school or the police would have to deal with him.

She has presented twice to a large third sector organisation that is funded by the state to help refugees but nothing has happened out of those presentations. She has also presented at Homeless Families in the City Centre and was turned away.

This young man's younger brother is at the same school, she told us, and he is getting on fine.

.....

We then interviewed the local Somali speaking community worker that auntie had referred to. They described the following.

Originally they met with three people: child, recently arrived mum and family friend. Mother was very distressed and concerned about her son being 15 and not in school. She was unhappy with the situation, and believed that the aunt had been using him as a childminder. She had not received any clear support from auntie and so she had decided to go to helping agencies herself.

She was asking "Can you help me find my son a school, especially X senior School as he was previously a student there." However, mother could not do anything directly herself. That was impossible because of the cultural and language barriers. Mum was relying on her child to translate and interact for her.

This community worker presented at the reception of X Senior School with the young man. He showed the receptionist a letter about the young man that had been sent to the family by the Deputy Head Teacher. The community worker was advised by the school receptionist that they could not be seen: they should write a letter explaining what had changed since the young man had left the school.

The community worker wrote a letter in the name of the mother, handed that into the school in person. They received no reply and so they returned to the schools reception. They were told "there is no deadline." The community worker's impression was that the school was very protective: "We know you want to see him but you are not going to see him". There was a heated discussion. This took place before the Easter holidays. The community worker went back after Easter and eventually had a meeting with the Deputy Head teacher where they highlighted the problems as they understand them.

1. Parents do not understand the UK procedures and systems for getting children into school. They still think about the way it works at home and they have little opportunity to understand how the system here works.

2. If the child is not staying with parents, relatives may have different vested interests.
3. Lack of parents working with schools which is bound up in the language barriers.
4. The families do not necessarily understand the severity of the problem in the sense that it may have a huge impact on the future of their children.
5. This problem needs early intervention.

To us, the community worker described their frustration with the fact that racist attitudes are difficult to demonstrate and quantify. ‘What you could read from her [receptionist’s] face: “I have defeated them”. Their sense is that the school is very protective and does not want the outside to know about inside the school. The school demonstrates a lack of interest in the child and his future, and they do not offer positive cooperation. On the contrary, the school seems relaxed about the whole situation, not interested in eradicating the problem.

In this community worker’s view, their interaction with school staff demonstrates poor decision making, a lack of professionalism and poor ethical values on the part of the school.

“You get frustrated and ground down until you stop. And then it is the telephone system...leaving messages all the time. Need to speak to a human being.”

.....

We then discussed the case with a third sector practitioner. He is not Somali but he specialises in work with young Somali men, and had worked with members of this family.

“Amazing how much business is based on war – the terminology of war, the targets, now it is in schools and in youth work. The framework they (staff) have to work with. It is way too rigid and it is based on numbers.

That’s the way they sell it to us “it’s your fault”. It’s an unofficial process. All the African Caribbean and mixed race boys in my class were excluded [1990’s]. Makes that person feel responsible without highlighting that the school has a responsibility... a big flaw is being unravelled. Those that don’t fit will be dropped and glazed over. You can run the projects but the wider system does not change – nothing you can do. They don’t expect excellence from the kids that is one of the flaws. The whole time I was at school, one teacher mentioned to me, had a conversation about the real world. Expectations are so low and then there is the pressure of performance for the school. Let’s work on quality not quantity.

The young men are slipping through the net. There are triggers. How do you feel – it’s minor it’s nothing. No one is maintaining a watching brief. On our little project we have worked with up to 30 young men but there is no long term plan. You don’t get much help.

At this point the case was referred to a human rights organisation. That organisation took up the case. At the end of October 2009 with the young person still not being educated anywhere, the human rights organisation referred the case to solicitors who began to act on his behalf. In January 2010, the young Somali man re-entered full time education in Manchester. He had been without any schooling for about 18 months.

Discussion

From the Statistics Alone

The statistical findings reveal five critical facts:

- The differences in the ways that individual schools, Connexions and the City Council record ethnicity are a barrier to establishing a standardised ethnic background profile about our young people.
- The schools census data – the ‘meta dataset’ showing destinations as at December 2008 – is internally incomplete. Somehow, basic information about some children is missing, notably gender and ethnicity.
- In addition to the NEET category, there are at least three other categories that could include young Somali people who are NEET, the largest of which is Destination Not Known (n=22).
- An unknown number of children, some or many of whom may be Somali, who either started out in year 7 as a part of the 2008 year 11 Central Collegiate cohort, or who joined that cohort between years 7 to 11 but who have ended up as persistently absent or permanently excluded from school, are now completely excluded from the official statistical database about that cohort.
- To date, no reporting mechanism exists to ensure that schools based information about children from the cohort who have become either persistently absent or permanently excluded from Central Collegiate, is included in any publicly accessible profile about the numbers, ethnicities and genders of young people from the area who are in/around NEET.

These research findings about what and how statistics are - or are not - collected and shared, is corroborated by data from practitioners and from families, including young people themselves: there is evidence of triangulation.

The discussion that follows concentrates on this triangulation.

Communication barriers

The quality of communication within key relationships between people is instrumental: young people themselves, parents, PA’s in schools, other school staff and officers responsible for children missing education, all identify that when communication is *inhibited* or *distorted* between people – be they acting on behalf of themselves, their family or their institution/organisation - a young person may become NEET, at risk of becoming so, or one of the young people who are not on any official radar.

However, these communication barriers are mediated - or heightened - through different influences and forces, depending upon your place in the communication pathway.

Between parents and school

If parents - usually lone mothers - do not read or write in either English or Somali or both, they become reliant on the young person to interpret any written communication, including that which has been translated. This includes any literature that the school may produce in hard copy or on the web that describes the ethos and culture of the school, their customs and practices around involving families, and any specific materials about individual students i.e. notification about parents' evenings, concerns about behaviours, requests for meetings.

The possibility persists that the young person themselves may be struggling to communicate in English at school, both verbally and in writing. In such instances, alongside their parent, they may be feeling confused about what the school is trying to do with them, and what their own roles and responsibilities are. In these cases, families are even further disadvantaged when it comes to developing a clear and constructive communication pathway with their school.

Even when young men can interpret accurately they admit to sometimes distorting the message from school. They do this to convey the impression that nothing is wrong – even though they know that something is wrong – and to protect their mothers from worry.

This situation can only begin to improve through both the young person and the parent becoming able to read, write and speak fluently in English. In turn, this fluency can only occur through opportunities to access ESOL.

Where the parent can either read or write in English, or do both, data suggest that other communication barriers come to the fore. In part, these may be affected by parents' emotional responses to what they hear directly from their children about treatment at school, and to their negative interpretations about what they witness and experience when they, as parents, try to communicate directly with the school themselves. The reports of school staff appearing to seek to avoid direct contact with a parent about their own child, and again when that parent comes to advocate on behalf of the parent of other children should give cause for concern. This dynamic is not isolated, being independently corroborated in this research through the experience of the worker in the community based organisation that is included in the case study.

However, these examples of barriers to effective parent-school interaction that are either exacerbated by the young person or perceived to extend from school to parent/third party advocates do not exist in isolation. They are accompanied by deep feelings of social alienation and extremely low expectations on the part of some Somali adults and children about how people who are not Somali behave towards them. It may be that, because of the feelings of persecution that they detect from sections of the wider community, some Somali parents and pupils are predisposed to interpreting *any* approach or response from the school as negative. In such cases, the school based practitioners are functioning at a distinct disadvantage.

It is striking that none of our practitioners have spoken explicitly about any Somali children becoming NEET with whom they have worked directly. On the contrary, they vividly describe sensing the isolation that can arise when Somali students and their parents cannot communicate effectively. This contradictory experience is

reflected in the statistical gap in this research which, officially, is showing one Somali NEET pupil for the Central Collegiate 2008 cohort.

On one hand, where practitioners are able to detect isolation/communication barriers on the part of young Somali people, they act to dismantle those barriers by involving other school staff, and by encouraging the young person themselves to make direct contact with their form tutor to tell them that they need help to address these problems.

On the other hand, testimonies from parents and young people describe other young Somali people who are either off the school's register before any Connexions contact – having become persistently absent or permanently excluded and not reported to/actioned by children missing education before Connexions become involved – or who are becoming NEET after the December cut off point.

Between individual schools, Connexions, Manchester City Council and the Department for Children Schools and Families(DCSF)

Close working relationships between teachers and school based Connections staff are evident in the data. However, the two-way information flow taking place between individual workers from different organisations who are both connected with individual pupils is not necessarily moving across the boundaries of the four organisations that, between them, carry statutory responsibility for young people in and around NEET: namely individual schools, Connexions, Manchester City Council and the DCSF.

The reasons of long term absence on the part of strategic staff, competing workload priorities on the part of dataset analysts, and data protection issues relating to individual datasets, all cited at different stages of the research, have inhibited information flow: ultimately, we have been unable to secure a complete dataset for the 2008 year 11 cohort that shows their movement on and off the school registers. However, this is not to say that the professionals that we approached did not want to get to the bottom of this very thorny question of measurement. Rather, as employees, they felt constrained from doing so.

In some measure, it is not unreasonable to suggest that this constraint is bound up in deeper questions about the culture of litigation and political will. The stark fact is that, in combination with other factors, the official statistical returns about NEET determine the amount of money that the city receives from Central Government. At the point in our research process where we concentrated upon the recording and measurement of persistent absence and exclusion, some strategic level staff displayed palpable nervousness. In response to being asked basic questions about how children who stopped going to school – for whatever reason - were being detected and counted, they directly expressed concerns about whether we intended to go to the press with any information that we uncovered. This would appear to indicate that staff feel vulnerable – even fearful - when it comes to exposing their systems to independent scrutiny.

Indeed their fear and their very low expectations of our ethics as independent researchers, is almost a mirror image of the fear and low expectations of evident among young people and their parents.

Old problem, new population

An education system that appears to be failing young black men who live in its inner city area is not a new phenomenon²⁵. This is borne out in our case study. A community based worker who is not Somali can directly correlate what he sees happening to the Somali men who now come to him, with what happened between ten and twenty years ago in Manchester schools to himself and his peers who are African Caribbean.

Of course, there are additional complexities now. Some of them are bound up with the barriers in the city to learning the English language²⁶. This is fundamental for securing any constructive change. Another complexity relates to the continuing distress that Somali people feel about their homeland²⁷ and the ongoing involvement of western powers, including the UK, in the internal affairs of Somalia. While neither of these issues directly address what happens in schools in the middle of Manchester, equally, they are not separable from any account that might be developed about why Somali people and educational practitioners are struggling in their efforts to secure good educational outcomes as, or with, young Somali men.

In addition, they are continuities with past periods in British society. The depth to which members of our society who are Muslim – and this is almost all Somali people – feel that they have become unjustly criminalised in the post 9/11 western society has echoes in the past. The frustration that preceded the riots by more than 1,000 young people who besieged the police station at Moss Side in July 1981²⁸ had arisen out of the unfair implementation of the stop and search laws law within the black community at that time. Now, the application of Stop and Search laws to our Muslim youth, which are being described as alienating young people from our ethnic minority communities, are being contested at the highest levels of our legal systems²⁹.

If young people feel that they are being unfairly treated and discriminated against in their everyday activity and movement, there is no reason to expect that feeling to be

²⁵ Bourne, J., Bridges L., and Searle C, (1995) *Outcast England: How schools exclude black children*. London: Institute of Race Relations ISBN 0 85001 046 2, 1994.

²⁶ Smith, P. (2009) Students thrown off English course at Manchester College. *The Mule Newspaper*, November. *Short link: <http://mcrmule.com/?p=1250>*

²⁷ Moran RA, Mohamed Z and Lovel H (2006) Breaking the silence: participatory research processes about health with Somali refugee people seeking asylum. In Moran and Temple (eds) *Doing Research with Refugees*, Bristol: The Policy Press.

²⁸ James, CLR. (1981) The nine year old leader (C.L.R. James on Moss Side). <http://libcom.org/library/nine-year-old-leader-clr-james>

²⁹ Meade, G. (2012) Police stop and search powers ruled illegal. Press Association. *The Independent Newspaper*. 12th January. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/police-stop-and-search-powers-ruled-illegal-1865608.html>

left outside the school gates. As such, both the young people themselves and the practitioners who have dedicated their careers to working with them, deserve meaningful support and the opportunity for an open dialogue about what this research has uncovered and how it can be used to secure future improvements.

Who can make meaningful recommendations for action?

The findings of this research speak for themselves. In addition, the issues that we have highlighted in the discussion section do not make for easy reading.

In our view, a strategy that can create solutions, which is what a set of recommendations would be, can only be constructed through the direct engagement of the commissioners, i.e. Connexions and the schools of the Central Collegiate, alongside the people who have created this data: Somali families, the front line schools based practitioners, Children Missing Education and those responsible for collating and communicating the statistics.

Together, in the process of drawing out recommendations that are rooted in this report, they can collaboratively construct their own, evidence based, shared perspective, on how best to proceed locally. Arguably, such a construct could offer an important and inspirational example for other areas of the country where our Somali communities live.

POSTSCRIPT (050312):

This research report was finally launched on 4th March 2012 at the Friends Meeting House in the centre of Manchester at a public meeting facilitated by RAPAR (www.rapar.org.uk) in partnership with the newly emerging Manchester Somali Men's Forum, the development of which is being supported through a LloydsTSB Foundation community development grant.

The event publicity and the agenda from the meeting are attached as Appendices 6 and 7.

At the meeting, Cllr Cox, representing Moss Side Ward of Manchester, publicly announced the following intentions:

- To work to ensure that the voices of Somali young people are heard in wider debates across the City
- To look at the links with the Powerhouse
- To ensure that Local authority workers look at the data about statistics that appears in this report and challenge them if necessary

The meeting decided to activate two areas of work immediately:

1. Collectively, to publish an Open Letter to the Headteacher of the Manchester Academy asking for a public meeting within the next two weeks at the school about the issues raised in the meeting, and to involve the parents from the Claremont Road Junior school.
2. To organise mentoring and counseling opportunities for young men from Somali backgrounds through the Manchester Somali Men's Forum.

Appendix 1

Statistical data requested

1. Current destinations of young people who left Year 11 in summer 2008 in schools in Central Collegiate
 - By school
 - By gender
 - By ethnicity
2. How many in EET?
3. How many in NEET?
4. How many in Not Known?
5. How many Cannot Be Contacted?
6. How many Dormant?
7. How many in youth custody?
8. How many asylum seekers?
9. Bullet points describing processes of database construction
10. Other tracking devices being used by either Connexions or the schools to determine subsequent situations for year 11's who left in the summer of 2008.
11. Lists that show year on year movement of these pupils in and out of school from year 9 to year 11 - from each school.

Appendix 2

Request for statistical information about exclusion

Year on year, from year 7 to year 11, for the 2008 year 11 cohort:

EXCLUDED STUDENTS

1. How many students from this cohort (gendered and ethnically identified) were permanently excluded each year from the 7 out of 8 schools (excluding the Academy) within the Central Collegiate area?
2. Of those excluded, what was their subsequent recorded educational provision up to 16, and their recorded destination by December 2008?

AND, exclusively related to the cohort of school students who would have been in Year 11 in the summer of 2008, in Central Collegiate Schools:

3. For each year, from their year 7 through to their year 11, gender and ethnic identity of every student who was permanently excluded from any of the schools (excluding Manchester Academy as you do not hold their stats I understand) in the Central Collegiate area. This data needs to include a way for us to ensure that we can identify if the same child is excluded from more than one school but not to give us their specific individual identity.
4. School absence data from their year 7 through to their year 11, gender and ethnic identity. This data needs to include a way for us to ensure that we can anonymously identify if the same child is recurrently absent as they have moved through different schools.

Appendix 3

Questions to guide small group discussions with Connexions staff

1. How are young people identified to become a part of the cohort that are assigned to a schools based personal advisor if appropriate?
2. What are the mechanisms agreed with other agencies whereby all vulnerable people are assigned to an advisor or lead professional?
3. How do you use the intended destination information to help prioritise caseloads?
4. What is the follow through for people who are recorded as 'Current Situation Not Known'?
5. Do you have access to the CCIS database in your place of work?
6. What sort of education do you access about data standards and the local processes in place to support them?
7. Are the outcomes of young person's assessments clearly visible to those personnel advisors that need them?
8. Do you have access to required resources from anywhere your work takes you?
9. How would you describe the quality of information sharing with your partners?
10. How frequent are the data feeds that are intended to ensure that young people dropping out of learning are identified in time to offer additional support?

Appendix 4

Questions for Senior School staff with overall responsibility for children at risk of becoming NEET.

1. Do you have any Somali, Ethiopian, or Eritrean students in the school?
2. Which levels are they?
3. What if any concerns, problems and difficulties do you have in providing appropriate support

With communication pathways

With resources

4. Do you work with families and, if so, how?

Appendix 5

Questions supplementary to telephone interview with senior school staff member

As a part of our efforts to construct a statistical baseline as it relates to the 2008 Year 11 cohort for the Central Collegiate area could you could tell us:

1. The gender and ethnic identity - but not personal identity - of any pupil that has been permanently excluded from this cohort from year 7 through to year 11.
2. How many young people, and their gender and ethnic identity, have moved into the school each year from this cohort.
3. How many young people, and their gender and ethnic identity, have moved out of the school each year from this cohort.

Appendix 6 **Public Meeting: Educating Our Children
Somali Families'**
Issues and Concerns



Sunday 4th March
5.30 pm
Main Hall of Friends Meeting House
6 Mount Street, Manchester, M2 5NS

Chairperson: Zeinab Mohamed, Matron RAPAR

Speakers: Somali parents from Manchester schools and a former pupil from Manchester Academy

Invited: Manchester City Council Director of Children and Family Services (this service includes Manchester's Schools), Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police, Moss Side Councillors and the Central Collegiate MP, Rt Hon Tony Lloyd and teacher Trade Union representatives.

Dr R. Moran and Ms Z Mohamed will deliver a short presentation to launch the original research, 'What's around NEET – and Why? Young men from Somali Backgrounds (2012)'. This research was commissioned by Manchester Central Collegiate in partnership with Focusing First on People.

This is a Public Meeting and everyone is welcome



In Partnership with the Somali Men's Forum

PRESS RELEASE: New research raises concerns about education of young men from Somali families in Manchester

Public meeting to launch research and discuss the issues it raises – Sunday, March 4th, 5.30pm, Friends' Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, Manchester

New research, to be launched at a public meeting on Sunday, shows a big gap between NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) statistics relating to young men from Somalia in Manchester and the experiences of families in the Somali community itself.

The meeting will try to understand why such a large gap exists between the official records and the families' own experiences - and will provide a platform for people in the Somali community to discuss their concerns about the education of young Somali men. It will also publicise the new Manchester Somali Men's Forum which is helping to address many of the issues highlighted in the report.

Dr Rhett Moran and Ms Zeinab Mohamed will deliver a short presentation on the research they carried out "What's around NEET – and Why? Young men from Somali backgrounds (2012)". The research was commissioned by Manchester Central

Collegiate in partnership with Focusing First on People and it involved eight schools, Connexions and people from the Somali community.

The meeting will be chaired by Zeinab Mohamed, who is a Matron of RAPAR, the Manchester-based human rights organisation. Speakers will include Somali parents from Manchester schools and a former pupil from Manchester Academy. Having been invited to the meeting, Manchester City Council's Director of Children and Family Services intends to send a representative and Greater Manchester Police have said that the Divisional Commander with responsibility for Longsight and Moss Side will consider sending a representative. Tony Lloyd MP is keen to join us. Moss Side councillors and teacher trade union representatives have also been invited.

A spokesperson for the Somali Men's Forum said: "We hope to create an education group within the Forum following the discussions at the meeting. This meeting is addressing issues that have not been addressed before and we will show how passionate the Forum is about working with the community. The Forum is providing a resource which is benefiting young people and their families. It is accessible to young people: they can relate to members of the Forum because we have already been through the education system and know what it is like for them."

An 18 year old who will speak at the meeting added: "The meeting will be a great experience for the Somali community, it shows there are people out there who care and will provide young people with the support they need. The support I received from the Forum has encouraged me to go to college."

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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Appendix 7

PUBLIC MEETING, SUNDAY 4th MARCH, 2012, 17.30 – 21.00

Friends Meeting House Main Hall, 6 Mount Street, Manchester M2 5NS

**'Educating Our Children:
Somali Families' Issues And Concerns'**

Agenda

17.30 Registration and Networking Opportunity

18.15 Welcome from the Chair, Zeinab Mohamed, RAPAR Matron*

18.20 Platform speakers' introductory remarks that will include Somali Womens' and Mens' Fora representatives, parents from local schools and young Somali people themselves

18.50 Presentation by Dr Moran, with extracts read by members of Manchester Somali Men's Forum, of key research findings from '***What's around NEET – and Why? Young men from Somali backgrounds (2012)***', commissioned by Manchester Central Collegiate in partnership with Focussing First on People**

19.20 Speak out..... Open discussion..... Everyone is welcome to contribute

20.40 Bringing it together - Next steps from the Somali Men's Forum

*There will be simultaneous translation for people who want it. This meeting will be filmed. When you arrive, please let Sara know if you do not want to be on camera. Sara will be at the registration desk.

**Copies of extracts from the research report and full details of where you can download a pdf version of it will be available at the meeting.

This is a Public Meeting and everyone is welcome



In Partnership with the Somali Men's Forum

RAPAR is a Registered Charity 1095961

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