



The Consumer Council

**Pathways to Success
A Strategy for Those Not in Education, Employment or Training
(NEET)**

**The Consumer Council's Submission to the Department of
Employment and Learning**

June 2011

1.0 Consumer Council Role

- 1.1 The Consumer Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department of Employment and Learning's (DEL) Strategy for Those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

- 1.2 The Consumer Council is an independent consumer organisation set up in legislation to safeguard the interests of Northern Ireland consumers, particularly the vulnerable and disadvantaged. Our aim is to make the consumer voice heard and make it count. We represent consumers in the areas of transport, water and energy. We also have responsibility to educate consumers on their rights and responsibilities and to equip them with the skills they need to make good decisions about their money and manage it wisely.

- 1.3 Overall, while the Consumer Council is supportive of the Action Plan, we believe there is a need to set clear deliverable targets and mechanisms to measure, review and evaluate progress.

2.0 The Consumer Council's Proposed Policy Position

- 2.1 The Consumer Council recognises that there are a wide range of contributory factors to young people finding themselves in this category so we consider that the strategy should be more broadly based and also involve a broad reach of relevant agencies.

2.2 The Consumer Council is interested in becoming involved in the proposed interdepartmental links to deliver the strategy and in the evaluation of the outcomes.

2.3 We are fully committed in providing resources to help literacy and numeracy tutors, youth and family workers boost consumer and financial capability skills among NEET clients. In the Consumer Council's corporate plan for 2011-2015, younger people have been identified as one of our priority groups. Younger people who are NEET are one part of this grouping. To make the most effective use of resources and project priorities, we propose that the Consumer Council can support this Strategy in the following ways:

- Actively promote educational resources to tutors delivering Training for Success (DEL), Youth Enterprise Programme and Enterprise Development Programme (DETI), Barnardos (via NEET Strategy Forum), Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI), the Youth Council, the Participation Network, the International Fund for Ireland's "Youth Works" programme, Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO) employability scheme, the Youth Justice Agency (YJA) and the Probation Board Northern Ireland (PBNI) and Include Youth "Give and Take" scheme; and
- Continue to equip literacy tutors with resources to support their learners (DEL - Essential Skills) and promote 'Train the Trainers' sessions to boost consumer and financial capability skills.

2.4 The Consumer Council is committed to continuing work on financial capability initiatives and believes this work could be further strengthened with input from DEL and their stakeholders. We have a key role nationally and locally as the main driver of building financial capability.¹ We lead the Financial Capability Partnership NI (the Partnership) which brings together Government, banks, building societies, credit unions, education and community groups to ensure that we all help consumers in Northern Ireland to manage their money and make it work best for them. The Partnership provides free training, support, guidance and resources to *all* consumers across Northern Ireland including those who fall within the NEET category. The objective of this work is to help consumers acquire the money management skills they need for life and work.

2.5 The Consumer Council believes that DEL should take cognisance of barriers that prevent young people from accessing training and employment opportunities. Previous research the Consumer Council undertook with YouthAction N.I. identified a lack of public transport services as a barrier which prevented young people from accessing education, training and employment opportunities. A copy of the report, entitled "Transport Matters - Young People's Experiences, Attitudes and Ideas for Improving Public Transport" is available online from the Consumer Council's website www.consumercouncil.org.uk/publications/?id=612

¹ Being financially capable means understanding the importance of money and having the skills and confidence to manage and use it wisely.

1.4 The Consumer Council appreciates the opportunity to participate in this consultation. We hope you will find our comments useful and that our views will be reflected in the final decision making process. We are willing to brief DEL on the work that we are involved in to support young people in NEET. We are also keen to support tutors and trainers working to empower this group to have the skills and confidence to exercise their consumer rights online and in the high street so they can manage their money better and make a positive impact on their communities. If you would like to arrange a briefing from us or if you require any additional information please contact Nóra Quigley, Senior Consumer Affairs Officer (Social Needs) at 028 9067 4803 or e-mail nquigley@consumercouncil.org.uk