

Hidden

Who are 'hidden' young people and why are they not engaging with welfare support?



Executive Summary

This report presents the findings from research undertaken to explore and understand 'hidden' young people across Greater Manchester.

The aim of this research was to identify:

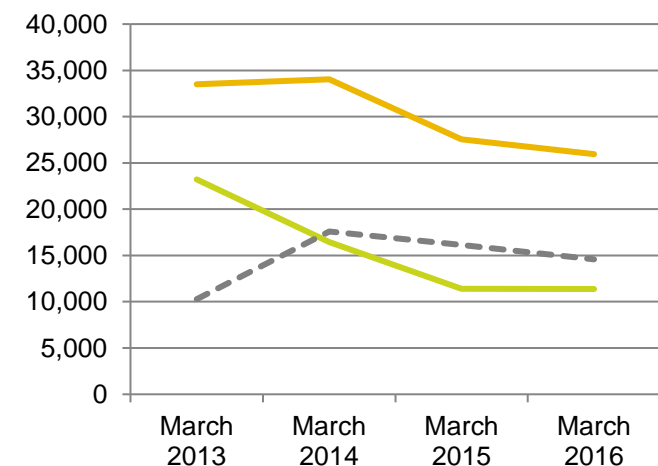
- The profile of 'hidden' young people
- Why 'hidden' young people do not seek or receive welfare support

Researching 'hidden' young people

'Hidden' young people are defined as people aged 18-24, who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and are not in receipt of welfare support.

Although it is not possible to unequivocally state how many young people are currently 'hidden', using a measure developed for the purpose of this research^{1,2}, it is estimated that just fewer than 15,000 young people (aged 16-24) were 'hidden' in Greater Manchester in March 2016.

Figure 1.1: The unemployment rate (reduced by 23%) and claimant count of 16-24 year olds in Greater Manchester, including the difference between the two figures



— Claimant Count
— Unemployment Rate
- - - Difference

The effect of being 'hidden'

As many welfare to work programmes, including the government's Youth Contract, target and support 'known' young people claiming out-of-work benefits (through participant criteria), 'hidden' young people, who are disengaged from the welfare state and are not claiming out-of-work benefits, are excluded from, and unlikely to receive any kind of economic or back-to-work support.

Research suggests that experiencing unemployment at a young age can have a long-term, negative effect on young people. Described as the 'scarring' effect, this suggests they are more likely to spend longer out of work throughout their life; be paid less when in work (Macmillan, 2012); have poorer mental and physical well-being; and be involved in criminal activity (Bell & Blanchflower, 2010).

Who are 'hidden' young people?



'Hidden' beneficiaries on Talent Match are predominantly male, aged 18-20, and live at home with their parents; a large number also live with relatives/friends/partners.

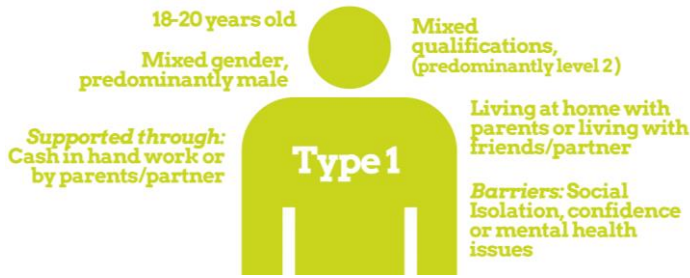
A typology of 'hidden' young people

From the research, a typology of 'hidden' young people has been developed which typifies the demographic of 'hidden' young people who participated in this research.

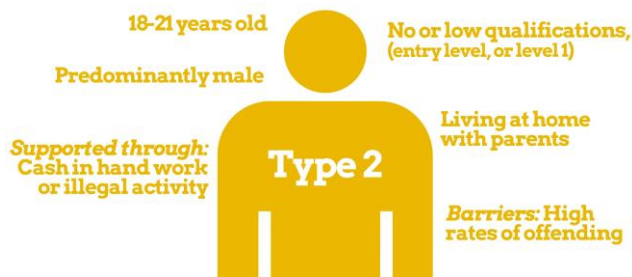
'Hidden' young people tend to fall into one of two groups; **Type 1** and **Type 2**, which are explored further overleaf.

¹ The unemployment rate (defined as anybody who is not in employment, has actively sought work in the last 4 weeks and is available to start work in the next 2 weeks, or has found a job and is waiting to start in the next 2 weeks) reduced by 23% to account for 'unemployed' students, minus the DWP claimant count.

² The claimant count is the number of people receiving benefits principally for the reason of being unemployed. This includes those claiming JSA or the unemployment related element of UC.

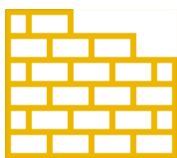


Type 1 young people have little certainty about their career interests and goals and, following disengagement with or withdrawal from Further Education (FE); spend increased periods of time at home, unsure of their next steps. As a result of subsequent social isolation, young people experience a number of issues, including mental health problems.



The cultural environment in which Type 2 young people live is thought to reinforce young people's perception that they are unable to source and attain meaningful employment. As a result of this, young people often withdraw from trying to find formal employment, and instead, turn to alternative, illegal means to financially support themselves.

Why are young people 'hidden'?



There are a number of barriers which deter 'hidden' young people from claiming welfare support and thus becoming 'known'.

For the most part, the barriers feature around their actual, or (more often than not) their perceived/expected experience, with the Jobcentre Plus.

In the main, this refers to the difficulties in applying for and maintaining welfare support; the experience of customer service; and issues around sanctioning.

“They have been sanctioned and then that’s it, they just give up after that, some just don’t bother.”

Additional barriers include access to alternative finance and the stigma associated with claiming welfare support.





**“I don’t want to be one of them”,
“I’m above that”
“I’m not a scrounger”**

Recommendations

Early intervention is crucial to prevent young people from becoming 'hidden' and thus experiencing long spells of unemployment and subsequent scarring effects.



In line with the findings of the research, the following recommendations have been developed for consideration and focus largely on interventions prior to compulsory education leaving age (aged 18).

Early intervention recommendations

-  Targeted, additional provision to support all young people to achieve literacy and numeracy L2 in FE.
-  Intensive careers, education, information, advice and guidance targeted at 'at risk' young people.
-  Improved tracking of young people
-  Inclusion of Jobcentre Plus in education.

Failing to tailor provision to engage 'hidden' young people is likely to exclude them from employment help and support, and also prevent Greater Manchester from understanding the full extent of youth unemployment. The following recommendations are suggested with a view to continuing support for 'hidden' young people, and ensuring future employment support provision is accessible to them.

Recommendations for young people who become 'hidden'

-  Recognition of the importance of community-based provision, and continuation post Talent Match.
-  Additional research to understand how to best engage with and support 'hidden' young people, who are not engaging with employment support