The information behaviours of disadvantaged and disengaged adolescents

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## Authors

Buchanan S.;Tuckerman L.

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## Sample

Young people aged 16-19 not in education, employment or training (NEET); and their
support workers.

## Implications For Policy Makers About

## Other PolicyMaker Implication

Digital citizenship

# Abstract

Purpose
 – The purpose of this paper is to evidence and better understand adolescent information behaviours in disadvantaged and disengaged circumstances, and explore issues of social integration.

 Design/methodology/approach
 – Interdisciplinary theoretical framework bringing together theories of information behaviour with theories of social capital. Mixed method design incorporating observation, interviews, and focus group conducted in areas of multiple deprivations. Participants’ young people aged 16-19 not in education, employment or training (NEET); and their support workers.

 Findings
 – Heightened access and internalised behavioural barriers found beyond those common to the general adolescent population, the former influenced by technology and literacy issues, the latter by social structures and norms. There is evidence suggestive of deception, risk-taking, secrecy, and situational relevance in information behaviours, and a reliance on bonding social capital characteristically exclusive and inward facing. Low levels of literacy and self-efficacy are significant interrelated issues, with NEET youth dependent upon support workers when seeking and processing information, and demonstrating passive non-motivated information behaviours often abandoned.

 Research limitations/implications
 – Highlights the need for further interdisciplinary research to explore complex relations between social and affective factors, and that seeks to both understand and influence information behaviours in disadvantaged and disengaged circumstances.

 Practical implications
 – Remedial literacy education recommended as an immediate priority for public and third sector agencies.

 Originality/value
 – First study of adolescent information behaviours in disadvantaged and disengaged circumstances. Novel interdisciplinary theoretical framework evidences and draws attention to understudied and enduring information poverty issues of significant societal concern, potentially consigning a significant proportion of the youth population to a stratified existence within an impoverished (small) information world. Sets a focused interdisciplinary research agenda.

# Outcome

“Online activities of NEET youth appear similar to general population peers with general browsing, social networking, and music and gaming commonly cited as popular activities; however, many of our participants spent notably more time online than their peer group average… The internet is used with high frequency [for information seeking] and considered to be of medium credibility”. (Buchanan and Tuckerman, 2016: 541). “Significant literacy issues (encompassing reading, computer, and information) are evident, exemplified by repeat observations of young people struggling with online searches, setting up accounts and completing forms, and processing information, and showing reluctance to take part in activities involving reading. Notably, the majority of the support workers stated that they would not direct a young person to find information independently, but would instead guide them to information sources. In relation, there was no evidence of proactive transitions to independent information seeking from either party, nor of basic literacy issues being explicitly addressed (although arguably falling out-with the direct remit (and primary skills) of support workers).” (Buchanan and Tuckerman, 2016: 543).