

WIRRAL COUNCIL

Children Sub Committee

16th December 2015

SUBJECT:	Post 16 qualifications and the impact on NEETs - update
WARD/S AFFECTED:	All
REPORT OF:	Director of Children's Services
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	Councillor Tony Smith
KEY DECISION?	No

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Wirral has a complex post 16 education and learning landscape. Wirral young people making the transition at age 16 in to further education and training have a number of options and pathways including, school sixth form, further education (including study programme provision) and Apprenticeships. A good range of post 16 opportunities are accessible locally; however, some young people choose to travel for specialist vocational learning to neighbouring local authorities and beyond.
- 1.2 This report identifies the numbers of young people transitioning in to post 16 learning and training opportunities whilst also assessing how successful they are by pathway. An analysis of learner attainment on entry to post-16 learning (all learning routes) has been completed in addition to valued added performance for some sectors. The report analyses the current local post 16 education and training provision in terms of quality and offer.
- 1.3 Local authority performance in respect of post 16 participation and the duty on placed on the authority in respect of Raising of the Participation Age legislation is good and improving. Levels of young people not engaged in employment, education and / or training (NEET) are the lowest recorded but are being challenged by recent local and national developments. Key challenges adversely impacting on participation include, national qualification reform, national Study Programme requirements, funding rate changes linked to efficiencies, Apprenticeship reform and the Education Funding Agency (EFA) free market approach to post 16 provision.
- 1.4 It is vitally important that young people are well prepared for the transition in to adulthood and post education and employment. The roll of schools in providing impartial and robust careers education, information, advice and guidance in critical. Post 16 participation rates will only continue to improve if young people are informed and equipped to plan their career pathway whilst having a comprehensive understanding of what the jobs of the future will demand of them.

- 1.5 The quality post 16 education provision in Wirral is general good with a number of institutions and colleges delivering outstanding levels of learner academic and vocational curriculum attainment. Outstanding provision at a headline level; particularly in the school sixth form sector, masks levels of under performance demonstrated by some small school sixth form provisions though. It is hoped that the current local authority review of sixth form provision will begin to help shape an improved provision map.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 Young people's participation rates in the borough are currently in line with Children's Trust 2015 Raising Participation Age targets at 92.9 percent (June 2015). Improvement needs to be made, however, if we are to ensure our young people, aged 16 to 19, participate at levels similar to those experienced regionally and nationally. To support this schools and academies must meet their statutory duty to provide robust careers education, information, advice and guidance. The Council must also ensure there is sufficient and suitable education and training provision to meet young people's needs.
- 2.2 Since 2010 the government's approach to the school, FE and work based learning sectors has been one of greater autonomy and freedom for providers to tailor their provision offer to meet local demand. This has been accompanied by a move to a further education funding regime based on learner numbers. Statutory duties for ensuring the sufficiency and quality of provision and raising participation in education, employment and training lie with local authorities.
- 2.3 The national perspective of what is required of the education of young people beyond the age of 16 has changed significantly over recent years, and is continuing to evolve. There has been a fundamental national reappraisal of the purpose of post-16 education and training, driven by three key factors, namely,
- a. There is a national aim to increase the academic and vocational challenge in qualifications attained by post-16 students as part of their study programmes, and to thus improve the worth of their studies. In particular there has been a focus on increased rigour in qualifications, testing, and an emphasis on improving students' future employability through additional maths, English and work experience.
 - b. The requirement for young people to participate in education and training was raised to the age of 17 from September 2013, and will rise again to the age of 18 in 2015. There is a commonly held view that we need to improve the abilities and increase the aspirations of young people through continuing education, whether their next steps are in higher education, training or employment.
 - c. There is an economic need to increase the number of young people receiving technical and vocational education to meet the demands of the future workforce. This demand is driven by a significant future need for new employees to replace those leaving an ageing workforce, and also the need for additional employees to meet the demands of economic growth. There is a political consensus that there should be an expansion in the number of young people taking apprenticeships and following work related education that is valued by Higher Education and/or Employers. This is necessary not only to meet labour market demands, but also to improve the employability of young

people and thus reduce the current high levels of unemployment amongst young people.

2.4 The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) recently published their intentions and policy in terms of local areas reviewing their post 16 provision in the context of a tight fiscal environment. There is a clear drive to move towards fewer, often larger, more resilient and efficient providers of post 16 education.

2.5 In addition to the national changes impacting on the roll and positioning of post 16 education there are also a number of substantial national developments which are influencing and shaping current and future services / delivery. The national influences having the greatest impact include:-

- Qualifications are changing to become more demanding in the areas of both academic and vocational education. It is intended that institutional accountability becomes more rigorous across all types of provider through changes in performance measures and the procedures used in inspection.
- The funding of sixth form education has declined significantly, and is expected to continue declining in the foreseeable future.
- There are new providers emerging in post-16 education. Whilst they bring additional choice and diversity to the sector, they can add to the competition for students amongst established providers of post-16 education.

2.6 Locally, post 16 participation rates are good with some 92.9% (adjusted figure as at June 2015) of the 16 to 18 cohort (11,409 young people) participating in some form of employment, education and training (EET). The proportions of Wirral young people not in employment, education and / or training (NEET) have, for the last 12 months, been the lowest ever recorded. The local authority NEET national indicator, published March 2015, detailed the average NEET (adjusted) to be 4.3 percent.

2.7 Analysis of Client Caseload Information Suite (CCIS) data (June 2015) illustrates the proportions of young people that access the key types of local post 16 education and training provision. This analysis is detailed below in table 1.

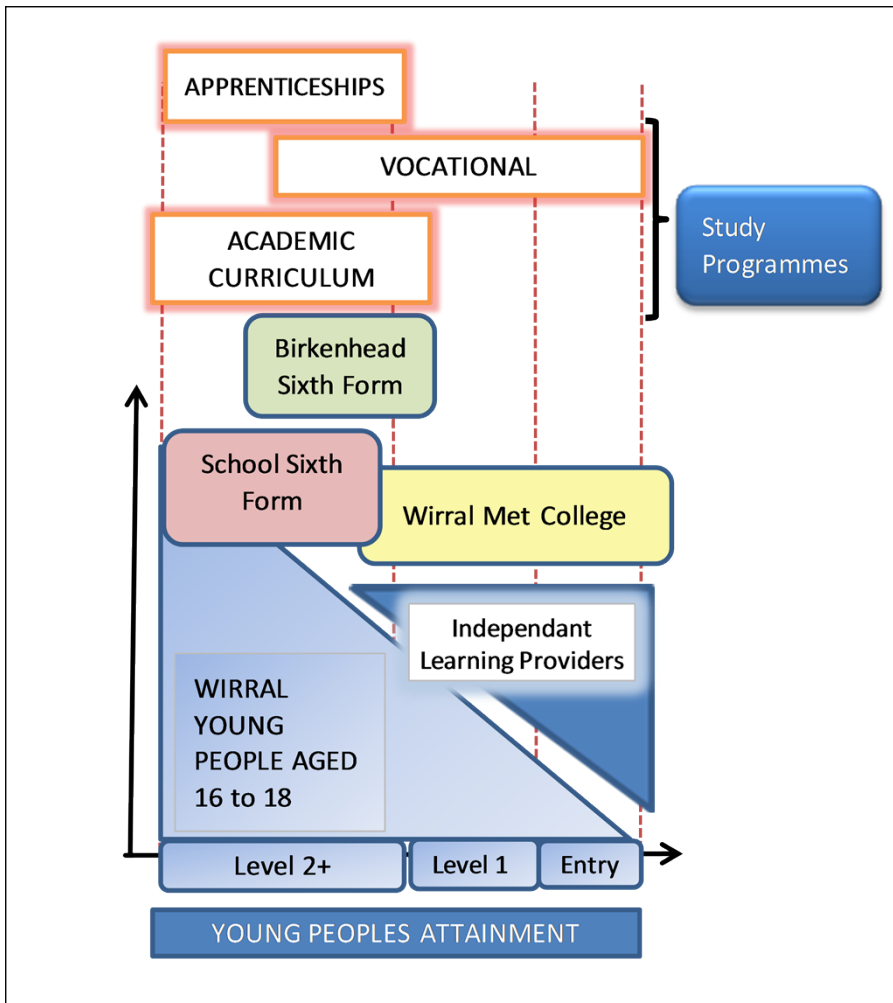
Table 1. Wirral Resident Participation - Young People aged 16 to 18 as at June 2015.

	Yr 12	Yr 13	Yr 14	NCCIS Cohort	% (adjustment applied)
Cohort total	3648	3880	3881	11409	
EET Total	3490	3647	3464	10,600	92.9%
i. of which in education, post Year 11 (includes FE and SSF)	3167	3046	2459	8672	83.9%
ii. of which in Employment	195	415	778	1388	13.4%
a. of which in Apprenticeships	158	290	402	850	8.2%
iii. Training	85	111	72	268	2.6%
EFA funded Work Based Learning	58	85	40	183	1.7%
NEET Group	94	144	201	440	4.0%
Current situation not known	107	163	383	653	5.7%
RPA Participating in EET	93.8%	90.2%			
Meeting RPA the Duty	93.9%	90.3%			

(Source: DfE, NCCIS, June 2015)

2.8 Diagram 1. below illustrates, in general terms, how the current mainstream Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency post 16 provision meets the needs of young people locally. The diagram illustrates that the highest attaining young people at age 16 generally progress in to schools sixth form provision at a grammar school. Moving down the attainment continuum provision is offered at the sixth form college and other secondary schools. The majority of young people choosing vocational options do so at Wirral Met College where the specialist resources exist. Some schools through their sixth form offer are also offering increasing volumes of vocationally related qualifications. Those more vulnerable young people with a lower level of academic achievement will access first steps provision at an independent learning provider as a stepping stone to further education and / or training. GCSE maths and English are key components of all study programmes, particularly for those young people that have not achieved a grade A* to C.

Diagram 1. An illustration of how Government funded post 16 education and training provision meets the needs of young people locally.



2.9 DATA ANALYSIS

2.10 Sixth Form Provision in Wirral Schools and Academies

Analysis of the key headline data illustrates the following key features of how well Wirral young people achieve:-

- 2014 performance at Key Stage 4 is extremely variable across the borough. Wirral has some of the best performing institutions nationally at key stage 4. However; in 12 schools / academies (48 percent) fell below and in some circumstances significantly below national averages.
- There are currently 19 schools (a mix of maintained, academy and independent) with a post 16 offer. In 2014 performance at Key Stage 5 in school sixth forms across academic and vocational programmes is very variable. Wirral has some of the best Key Stage 5 academic provision nationally. Analysis of DfE performance data shows that 12 schools (63 percent) had 2014 level 3 attainment levels at or above national averages. That said, 7 schools (37 percent) fell below 2014 level 3 national averages. A further two schools illustrated under performance in either academic or vocational qualifications.
- Ten (53 percent) of Wirral schools / academies had a sixth form provision in 2014 with less than 200 young people on roll aged 16 to 18.
- There is a strong correlation between post 16 institutions with pupil numbers in excess of 200 and good outcomes for young people.
- Analysis of DfE Level 3 progress measures (value added) illustrates that 74 percent of secondary schools ensure their pupils make at least expected levels of progress at level 3 in academic and / or vocational qualifications. 26 percent of schools (5x schools) have statistically significant negative overall academic qualification progress scores. Only one school has a positive academic progress measure score. In terms of vocational level 3 qualifications no schools have statistically significant negative scores. Three schools (16 percent) have statistically positive progress measure scores.
- Analysis of the 2014 local authority ALPS A-level value added report brings a further level of intelligence. Key messages include:
 - Between 2012 and 2014 average A-level value added for the borough is at the 40th percentile nationally. The average GCSE grade held by Wirral young people entering A-level provision is grade 'B' (6.2 / 6.3 QCDA points).
 - Between 2012 and 2014 the average A-level value added for 42 percent of schools (8 schools) was between the 10th and 25th percentile nationally.
 - A-level value added (measured as UCAS points per exam entry) for learners with high average GCSE grades at the end of key stage 4 (A*-A) is low. Wirral position is 10th to 24th percentile nationally.

2.11 Wirral Further Education and Independent Learning Provider (ILP) Performance. Analysis of the key headline data illustrates the following key features of how well Wirral young people achieve:-

- Number of young people aged 16 to 18 attend Wirral Met College have increased over the last three years to 1,771 in 2014. Outcomes (success rate methodology) for young people attending the College are in line with national averages at 83.1 percent (level 3 2013/14).

- The numbers of young people accessing post 16 education at the Birkenhead Sixth Form College increased by 23 between 2013 and 2014 to 1,210. Success rates for long level 2 programmes has improved year on year and is above national averages. Level 3 long programme success rates have also improved year on year. Provisional 2015 success rates illustrate a further improvement with success rates anticipated to be well within the top 10 percent of all sixth form colleges at 89.96%.
- Wirral young people attending independent learning providers (ILPs) for study programme curriculum are generally those working at entry level / level 1 and are aspiring to level 2. Wirral has a core of five locally based ILPs and the Greater Merseyside Learning Providers Federation that fund local providers to deliver study programmes on their behalf on a sub contracted basis.
- ILP success rate performance is variable with little consistency. Success rate performance at some providers is below national averages. The Vocational College, however, was reported nationally (FE weekly, May 2015) as one the country's top three performing ILPs in 2014 in terms of success rates.

2.12 Table 2. below contains information relating to Wirral young people participating in Apprenticeship provision. The key headlines of the analysis include:-

- The numbers of Wirral young people aged 16 to 18 participating in Apprenticeship provision has been declining year on year from a very high baseline.
- As an indicator of the quality and achievement rates of young people; success rates at level 3 have improved over the last three years (+5.9 percentage) and are 5.3 percent above the national average. Level 2 intermediate Apprenticeship success rates have however declined year on year and are -7.7 percent below the national average (2014).

Table 2. Wirral 16-18 Apprenticeship Participation and Success Rates

Year	Level	2012	2013	2014
Learner volume (leavers)	2 (intermediate L2)	920	610	450
	3 (advanced L3)	240	230	170
Success Rates	2 (intermediate L2)	75.1	61.4	61.8
	3 (advanced L3)	74.4	70.9	80.3
National Average	2 (intermediate L2)	71.9	69.7	69.5
	3 (advanced L3)	76.5	75.9	75.0

(Source: Skills Funding Agency, Apprenticeship Success Rate Reports)

2.13 OFSTED AND POST 16 EDUCATION AND TRAINING QUALITY

2.14 **Sixth Form Provision.** As at June 2015 26 percent (5 schools) of sixth form provision has a current grade 3 - requires improvement. In summary, Ofsted highlighted the following key themes in terms of local school sixth forms requiring improvement:-

- i. Pupil attainment consistently below average.
- ii. Pupils not making good progress from their starting points.
- iii. Courses not well matched to pupils prior attainment levels.

2.15 **Further Education College Provision.** As at June 2015 both further education colleges are graded as overall good. Ofsted inspections at Birkenhead Sixth Form College and Wirral Met College were carried out in December 2012 and May 2010 respectively. Wirral Met College are due for an inspection in 2015/16.

2.16 **Private independent learning providers (ILP).** Table 3. Below illustrates the current overall inspection grades for Wirral's core ILPs. Post 16 ILP provision is therefore in the main 'good' with only Rocket Training requiring improvement.

Table 3. Independent Learning Provider Ofsted Inspection Grades

Wirral Based Independent Private Provider	Latest Inspection Date	Overall Grade
Greater Merseyside Provider Federation	April 2013	Good - 2
Morthyng Vocational College	October 2014	Good - 2
Oakmere Community College	March 2012	Good - 2
Rocket Training Ltd	November 2014	Requires Improvement - 3
SHAW TRUST LIMITED (THE)	February 2012	Good - 2
The Vocational College Limited	June 2015	Good - 2

(Source: Ofsted Website, July 2015)

2.17 LEARNER DESTINATIONS

2.18 Annually the Department for Education tracks and publishes data relating to the relevant proportions of young people that successfully transition in to post 16 destinations at an institution and local authority level. This measure forms one the key performance indicators used by Ofsted in determining the quality careers guidance provided by schools / academies plus a measure of performance in respect of education and training provision at key stage 4 and 5.

2.19 2012/13 Key Stage 4 and 5 learner destination measure performance compares well against the national averages – see table 4 below:-

Table 4. 2012/13 Key Stage 4 and 5 Learner Destination Measure Performance

		Cohort size	% of YP in Employment, Education, Training (EET)	% of YP in Education	% that do not sustain their destination
Key Stage 4	Wirral	3,690	93%	91%	5%
	England		91%	89%	6%
Key Stage 5	Wirral	1,640	81%	73%	3%
	England		71%	64%	2%

(Source: DfE, January 2015)

		FSM EET	Not FSM EET	% Gap
Key Stage 4	Wirral	85%	94%	9%
	England	83%	92%	9%
Key Stage 5	Wirral	82%	84%	2%
	England	77%	77%	0%

(Source: DfE, January 2015)

2.20 Key points to note include:-

Key Stage 4 (at age 16).

- i. Overall positive destinations (92%) equal to or better than national and NW averages.
- ii. Significantly higher proportion of young people stay on in sixth form provision (54%).
- iii. Sixth Form College and Apprenticeships destinations – similar to national.
- iv. Proportion of young people transitioning to the FE College is much less than national average (19% vs 34%).
- v. 5% destination not sustained similar to national / regional.

Key Stage 5 (at age 18).

- i. Transition to EET is higher than national average at 84%.
- ii. A higher proportion go in to the FE College (9%) compared to national (6%).
- iii. 27% of young people get in to the top third of HEI's (higher than national and NW).
- iv. Overall the proportion of young people transitioning in to a HEI is similar to national / NW.

2.21 TRAVEL TO LEARN PATTERNS

2.22 Annually a significant volume of young people travel outside of the borough for further education provision. In 2013/14 28 percent (or 1,159 young people) of Wirral resident young people accessing further education did so at providers and colleges outside of the borough.

2.23 The draw effect of out of borough school sixth form provision is less with only 5.2 percent (201 young people) of school sixth formers travelling outside of Wirral. Of the 202 young people 67 percent travel outside of the borough to attend Neston High School in Cheshire West.

2.24 Inward migration of young people from other local authority areas. In 2013/14 193 (5.7 percent) young people travelled from outside of the Wirral to attend Wirral based FE institutions. A similar proportion (5.0 percent or 196 young people) travelled in to Wirral for school sixth form provision. The numbers of young people traveling in to the borough from Cheshire West and Chester is increasing year on year. In 2014/15 199 learners travelled in to Wirral for school sixth form provision, an increase of 14 percent based on 2013/14 statistics.

Table 5. Wirral resident out of borough education placement numbers

Institution Data Type	Learning Local Authority	Resident Learner Numbers		
		2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Further Education College / Independent Private Provider	Cheshire East	144	154	113
	Cheshire West and Chester	153	140	137
	Halton	4	1	8
	Knowsley	42	70	70
	Lancashire	30	8	7
	Liverpool	856	745	574
	Sefton	43	35	22
	St Helens	3	6	3
	Wirral	2,914	2,995	2,835
School Sixth Form Provision	Cheshire East	1	1	
	Cheshire West and Chester	144	137	122
	Knowsley	1	1	1
	Liverpool	15	57	99
	Sefton	1	5	4
	St Helens	1		1
	Wirral	3,863	3,701	3,682
		8,215	8,056	7,678

(Source: Education Funding Agency, July 2015)

- 2.25 Significant variation exists in terms of the qualification success of young people that travel and access learning outside of the borough. Table. 6 below illustrates the qualification success rates across the different learning sectors for young people staying and learning in the borough and those that learn outside of the borough. The data illustrates how when you factor in the success rates for young people access learning outside of the borough there is a drop in overall Wirral young people's global success rates.

Table 6. Comparison of 16 to 18 In and Out of Borough Learning Success Rates

Learning Sector	Success rates for 16-18s learning in borough	Success rates for 16-18s learning in borough and outside of the borough
ALL sectors	79.5%	78.2%
Sixth Form College	86.2%	86.3%
Further Education College	79.7%	78.0%
Independent Learning Provider	57.2%	54.5%

(Source: Skills Funding Agency, July 2015)

2.26 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- 2.27 In summary, locally the post 16 provider base exhibits the following key positive attributes but also includes significant areas for strategic support and challenge:-

- i. Annually huge variation exists in terms of outcomes for young people at Key Stage 4 at a school / academy level. Opportunities and post 16 progression pathways for those more vulnerable young people who do not achieve A* to C

- GCSE (including English and maths) and / or the equivalent of a full level 2 is limited. Constraints in terms of the Study Programme Curriculum linked to substantial qualification aims and the requirement to enrol on English and maths GCSE qualifications can be seen as a barrier or restriction for more vulnerable young people entering learning.
- ii. Wirral has good overall participation rates but there remains a 'hard core' of NEET young people that increases in size between the ages of 16 and 18 (circa 400 young people).
 - iii. Wirral has a number of small (<200 pupils), underperforming school 6th forms where the curriculum offer is limited and outcomes / learner progress is below national expected levels.
 - iv. The level 2 and 3 attainment inequality gap at key stage 4 and at age 19 is amongst the highest of any local authority area nationally.
 - v. Vocational provision is most effective in the further education college and particularly for those students who have not attained 5 (A*-C) GCSEs at school and go on to study at level 1 or level 2.
 - vi. Over the last three years the number of young people accessing recognised Apprenticeships has reduced even given the Governments strong focus on raising skills and supporting employers. National changes to recognised Apprenticeship framework delivery to drive up quality, including a minimum delivery timescale of 12 months; have negatively impacted on overall participant numbers.
 - vii. Apprenticeship success rates for Apprentices' on level 3 advanced programmes are significantly above national averages.
 - viii. Travel to learn patterns are complex and there exists variation in attainment dependent on whether, as a Wirral resident, you are educated inside or outside of the borough.

3.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 3.1 Fundamental national challenges in relation to post 16 funding and curriculum reform (including Study Programme) is likely to have a significant negative impact on local post 16 participation and levels of NEET. In the absence of any engagement provision there is the potential for our most vulnerable young people and those furthest from employment and post 16 education, to become further socially isolated and dependant on benefits.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 None

5.0 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 None

6.0 OUTSTANDING PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ACTIONS

- 6.1 None

7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

- 7.1 There are currently no implications for voluntary, community and faith groups; however, this may change if the number of hard core NEET young people increases.

8.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

8.1 None

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None

10.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

(a) Not on this occasion; this report is for information only and responds to the request from elected members for an update.

11.0 CARBON REDUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None

12.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

12.1 None

13.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

13.1 This report for information only.

14.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

14.1 Report for information purposes only; it has been produced as a response to a request for an update from elected members.

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