



Wirral Local Strategic Partnership Performance Management - Exceptions

Title:	National Indicator (NI) 117 – Not in education, employment or training (NEET)
Date:	12th January 2010

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents to the LSP Executive board the current position with regard to the performance of NI 117 - Not in education, employment or training (NEET) - following two quarters where the target was reported as red.
- 1.2 The LSP Executive Board agreed at its meeting of the 11th November 2009 that should an LAA improvement target underperform for a period of two or more consecutive quarters then the relevant delivery plan / progress report will be reported to a subsequent board meeting for consideration and to identify any further action to be taken.

2 Background

- 2.1 Reducing the number of young people aged 16-18 that are not in education, employment or training (NEET) is a key cross-departmental government priority and a Wirral PSA (6.9% by 2010) and Local Area Agreement target. NEET, as a partnership priority is also reflected in the Children and Young People's plan and Integrated Youth Support Strategy.
- 2.2 The first national performance indicator for reducing NEET was set in 2002 for a 10% reduction in NEET between November 2002 and November 2004. Following this further targets were set against 'best ever' performance levels and enshrined within PSA and LAA targets. Since 2004 the way that NEET figures are calculated has also changed so it is impossible to compare like with like:
- 2.3 **NEET Count Version One:**
In April 2005 the concept of N.E.E.T. adjusted figures were introduced. Essentially this is a statistical adjustment involving counting a proportion of the "not known" group as N.E.E.T. The effect on Wirral has not been huge as the numbers "not known" are small but at times the net inflationary effect has been a one percentage point increase.
- 2.4 **NEET Count Version Two:**
In 2006 Personal Development Opportunities (PDO's) such as volunteering, previously counted as engaged in Education, training or employment were counted as NEET.



2.5 NEET Count **Version Three:**

In 2006, the November 'snapshot' of NEET was replaced by a 'Mean' review of a Borough's NEET. Partnerships are now required to report on the average of November, December and January NEET performance, rather than the single November figure.

2.6 NEET Count **Version Four:**

In 2008 the method for counting the cohort has changed again to 'residency' based so is based on where the young person lives not where they have studied or seek to 'register' for work. The impact of this change has been an overall increase in NEET numbers.

2.7 NEET Targets

In 2009 we experienced the impact of the global recession. A number of target areas deemed to be impacted upon by the change in the economic climate were adjusted accordingly. **The NEET target was not included amongst those adjusted.**

This report describes the complex picture behind the 'NEET count', brings Board members up to date with progress and highlights some next steps in terms of potential further reduction of NEET levels.

3 **The rationale for reducing NEET – the impact**

For all those engaged in work with children and young people the rationale for reducing NEET is simple and derives from a determination to help young people to overcome barriers to achievement, be settled, develop their skills through learning and start on a route to a fulfilling and successful adult life. Investigation of the 1970 British Birth Cohort study has shown that being NEET for six months is likely to mean that by the age of twenty one a young man is:

- More than four times likely to be out of work
- Three times more likely to have depression and mental health issues
- Five times more likely to have a criminal record
- Six times less likely to have any qualifications

(Bridging The Gap: New opportunities for 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training – Social Exclusion Unit 1999.)



3.1 NEET Characteristics & at risk Sub Group

To address NEET there is a need to understand the characteristics of young people most likely to experience being NEET. Qualitative research conducted by the Connexions Service in 2007 with 77 young people identified the following:

Triggers to NEET	Enablers to EET
<p><u>Primary Triggers</u></p> <p>Leaving care Homelessness Difficult parental relationships Lack of qualifications Early school leaver Criminal record Caring for a parent Bullying Pregnancy</p> <p><u>Secondary Triggers</u></p> <p>Parental separation Drug and alcohol misuse Lack of appropriate support at school Moving home frequently Bereavement Learning difficulties Poor access to transport</p>	<p><u>Primary Enablers</u></p> <p>Family/parental support Financial support Advice, guidance and information from specialists eg. Connexions PAs, support workers Post 16 education Entry2Employment (E2E) Transport Parenthood</p> <p><u>Secondary Enablers</u></p> <p>Being in a stable relationship Stopping drug/alcohol misuse Peer activities/influences Gaining work experience/ voluntary work Career planning</p>

4 NEET levels in Wirral

4.1 Our progress

The Wirral NEET percentage for November 2009 (latest baseline data) is 9.10%

N.E.E.T. percentage by area at end of November 2009 (G.M.C.P. data).

GMCP DATA	Halton	Knowsley	Liverpool	Sefton	St Helens	Wirral	Greater Merseyside
% Adjusted NEET 2009	10.89	9.18	8.44	6.62	8.89	9.10	8.53
% Adjusted NEET 2008	13.93	12.76	9.93	8.39	10.16	9.52	10.14

- This is a reduction in a year on year comparison
- However the target trajectory for the NEET PSA (7.10%for November) to reach 6.9% has not been met.
- The pace of reduction remains a significant challenge and achievement of the target is unlikely in the current economic climate (fewer employment vacancies



available during 2009 than at any corresponding point in the life of the Connexions Partnership).

- In terms of the age breakdown a significant number of our NEET young people are in the upper age bracket and for **November 2009 16.8% are 16, 34.5% are 17 and 48.7% are 18 years old.**
- The data demonstrates that initial participation by the cohort is possible and the issue remains one of sustainability.

4.2 Wards with highest levels of NEET

The highest average 16-18 NEET % in Wirral is Bidston and St James at 20.48% NEET.

The lowest average 16-18 NEET % in Wirral is Heswall at 0.81% NEET and the average 16-18 NEET is 8.45%.

4.3 Churn

Government statistics suggest that only 1% of the NEET cohort remains NEET for the period between ages 16 and 18. As the figures suggest the cohort is in constant flux and significant effort is afforded to tracking young people in the population to ensure the NEET register is:

- a) Accurate
- b) Used to enable targeted support at young people when they become NEET.

During November there were 151 joiners to the NEET cohort in Wirral – 54 from FE/6th form destinations, 36 from employment, 26 from E2E/WBL and 7 moving into the area.

Our tracking capacity has improved and is better than regional and national benchmarks so the evidence we have is more accurate and compelling than ever. Currently we have the lowest ever levels of 16-18 young people not known to the Connexions Service at 2.94%.

4.4 NEET levels and the challenges ahead

- N.E.E.T. is reducing in Wirral in a year-on-year comparison.
- However the pace of reduction is still a significant challenge.
- The Annual Activity Survey is a Year 11 destination survey conducted and reported at the end of November each year. Please note that the survey results have not yet been finalised and this report has been drawn together to give Board members an indication of progress in this important area of work. The survey is a key measure of progression in the Borough and data is gathered in a consistent, valid and reliable manner in line with the D.C.S.F. Management Information Guide and reported to Government Office in January.



- In terms of the 2009 Activity Survey there are more young people in Wirral continuing in learning beyond Year 11 than ever before. The numbers who are N.E.E.T amongst the Year 11 leaver group has fallen to it's lowest ever level. The improvement over time (see table below) signals a marked and positive shift in outcomes for our 16 and 17 year olds reflecting higher achievement levels and a learning offer that more closely meets their needs and aspirations.

Provisional Activity Survey results by local area for 2009 Year 11 leavers.

	Cohort	Moved out of contact	Baseline cohort	Into Learning Figure	Into Learning % 2009	Into Learning % 2008	No Response % 2009	No Response % 2008	NEET % 2009	NEET % 2008
HALTON	1593	4	1589	1474	92.8	89.9	0.6	0.2	5.4	6.9
KNOWSLEY	1687	10	1677	1534	91.5	89.9	0.4	0.6	6.9	7.5
LIVERPOOL	5620	46	5574	5140	92.2	90.3	1.7	1.0	5.2	6.5
SEFTON	3669	9	3660	3490	95.4	93.1	0.4	0.1	3.2	4.2
ST HELENS	2218	11	2068	2068	93.7	92.7	0	9	4.9	5.5
WIRRAL	4241	34	4207	3951	93.9	92.1	0.3	0.1	4.6	5.6
GMCP	19028	114	18914	17657	93.4	91.4	0.7	0.5	4.8	6.1

- Our NEET group are predominantly 18 and over.
- The healthy high profile that the September Guarantee brings to Year 11 transition has significantly improved data exchange, particularly between the Learning and Skills Council, Local Authorities, F.E. Colleges and Connexions.
- Whilst outcomes for the Year 11 group as a whole are improving results for the most vulnerable young people are not improving at the same rate. This group has been hit hard by the reduction in the number of jobs with no training element.
- Numbers in work based learning are reducing nationally and locally as choice and volume has been reduced.
- Fewer young people are entering employment and numbers entering employment without training have significantly reduced.

4.5 NEET and vulnerable groups

- Significant progress has been made via the focus on 17 year olds and vulnerable groups. The numbers of 16-18 year olds in learning is increasing (84.91% November 2009 compared to 82.35% November 08), the number of 17 year olds NEET has been decreasing and whilst the impact on more vulnerable young people in these challenging times is noted above the number of Care leavers aged 19 who are in Education Employment or Training (EET) has increased to 40.63% compared to 35.29% at the same time last year. However the number of LDD young people EET has reduced in a year on year comparison 71.12% November 2009 (compared to 73.34% in November 2008 and the situation for this group is likely to worsen as:
 - Supported work and training places reduce in number.
 - Provider payment regimes that focus on full framework completion encourage risk averse recruitment practices.
 - The number of jobs with no training element reduces.



- Subsidies available to L.D.D. adults put young people at a market disadvantage.
- Young Offenders and teenage mothers in EET have decreased in a year on year comparison.

5 Challenges remaining:

The challenge remains to increase the pace of the reduction in line with the trajectory toward the 2010 PSA target of 6.9% which gives us considerable distance to travel. There are also significant priority groups within the NEET group, including those with LDD, care leavers, young offenders and teen mums for whom opportunities often contract more adversely than for their peers at times of economic pressure.

5.1 Risks Identified:

- Changes in economic climate impacting on availability of opportunities for the NEET group whilst target levels set before the recession are not adjusted.
- The change in the age profile of the NEET group and the challenges presented to Employers and Learning Providers of responding to the needs of the 'older' NEET group.
- Adult employment rates rising.

6 Continuing action:

- The Borough EET Strategy has been refreshed which outlines partner responsibilities and contributions to achieving the NEET target.
- The Activity Agreement pilot is a programme that focuses on structured activities and incentive payments for NEET young people and is delivered through Greater Merseyside Connexions. It continues to bear fruit with clear evaluation demonstrating improved progression rates, increased employability and reduced time spent NEET (on average 60% progressing into EET which is a significant achievement with some of the most marginalised young people). Confirmation was received in December that the Activity Agreement Pilot would continue through to 2011.
- The Wirral Wise Programme, supported by ESF, is embedding as part of the Wirral Learning offer, with its 3 strands of:
 - "Learn Wise"- preventative actions for young people in KS4
 - "Stay Wise"- preventative actions for Young people in post 16 education and training
 - "Work Wise"- Interventions targeted at young people who are NEET, aimed at progression via placements and work trials.
- The Wirral Apprentice programme is continuing to have a positive impact on opportunities for young people. Many of our NEET young people tell us that they 'want a 'job' and this programme has been able to offer positive choices



for young people and some really interesting opportunities from an apprenticeship in Rainwater Harvesting, through to Dairy Farming through to Jewellery Design!

- All apprentices appointed are Wirral residents and 22% were previously NEET, 31% would have become NEET without the programme and 16% were unemployed young adults who had previously been NEET. (figures current from 14-19 team at 15.12.09)
- Cabinet approval has been received for 50 further apprenticeships and the Wirral model is being promoted as an exemplar by NWEO to LGA groups.
- The September Guarantee thresholds have been met in Wirral this year, for 16 and 17 year olds.
- Targeted action with vulnerable young people and within NEET hotspot areas continues with enhanced GIS mapping capability.
- Teenagers can now receive text alerts for job vacancies by registering for the Job scan service via www.connexionslive

7 Current Priorities

In terms of the **blank sheet** there is clearly no single solution and a lot of existing provision is working and working well. The following aspects should support a swifter reduction:

- 7.1 **The Apprenticeship Challenge** – we need to continue to work with partners to promote the apprenticeship offer to young people and employers including identifying any available funding to continue to incentivise employer participation.
- 7.2 **The continuing development of the 14-19 ‘offer’** for young people particularly areas where there are a significant number entering and re-entering NEET.
- 7.3 **Developing an approach in Wirral that recognises ‘our learners’ rather than ‘my learners’** as part of developing collaborative approaches in the delivery of the 14-19 offer.
- 7.4 **The development of roll on roll off FE provision.** A number of young people start a course find that it isn't right for them and drop out (peak period January) after one term. They still want to pursue a course but cannot start an alternative until September. Some of these remain NEET until then. Work is underway with WMC to extend roll on roll off provision.
- 7.5 **Preventative work with key ‘feeders’ to NEET** – a lot of progress has been made here but a preventative focus as early as possible will pay further dividends.

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