

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Monday, 27 October 2021

REPORT TITLE:	AN OVERVIEW OF POST 16 PARTICIPATION IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOLLOWING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

Historically Wirral has experienced improvements in NEET performance year on year dating back to 2010 and the legacy of the 2009 economic recession. Since 2016, when the NEET counting methodology changed, the Wirral NEET rate has continued to remain low (top 50% statistically) against the backdrop of the Liverpool City Region's NEET 'Hotspot' status.

It is accepted that young people, aged 16 to 18, will often on occasion find themselves NEET and seeking support / advice; however, it is not acceptable for a young person to remain NEET from one month to another ongoing.

The 14-19 Team tracks, supports and reports monthly on a cohort of 7,311 (as of March 2021) Wirral resident young people in academic years 12 and 13 (ages 16 to 18). The service provides validated tracking data to the DfE with data being published quarterly.

Table 1 below illustrates the % change in NEET for the month of March between 2018 and 2021:

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	% change 2018-21
NEET Rate	3.6%	3.5%	3.7%	3.7%	0.1%
Not Known (NK) Rate	2.2%	2.2%	1.4%	1.2%	-1.0%
Overall NEET & NK	5.8%	5.7%	5.1%	4.9%	-0.9%

(Source, NCCIS, March data reports 2018 to 2021 (years 12 and 13))

To give the NEET percentages some context; in March 2021 the NEET rate of 3.7% equated to 274 young people. The percentage of young people not known in the same period (1.2%) equated to 90 young people.

Table 2 below illustrates the sectors in which Wirral young people have chosen to participate.

	Yr 12	Yr 13	Total Cohort	% (adjustment applied)
Cohort total	3710	3601	7311	
EET Total	3599	3347	6946	95.01%
i. of which in education, post Year 11 (includes FE and SSF)	3384	2987	6371	91.7%
ii. of which in Employment	137	308	445	6.4%
a. of which in Apprenticeships	90	167	257	4.03%
iii. Training	78	50	128	1.84%
NEET Group	86	188	274	3.7%
Current situation not known	24	66	90	1.2%

(Source NCCIS, March 2021)

Overall participation amongst young people is high (as reported in Table 2) at 95.01% but the pattern of participation is very different to previous years. An illustration of this is the continued reduction in Apprenticeship participation; down from 5.6% in March 2020 to 4.0% in March 2021 or the equivalent of -115 less young apprentices.

Delivery of participation and NEET services supports two of the key strategic Council themes, as outlined in the Wirral Plan 2025 (note: these are the same themes that will be included in the refreshed Wirral Plan 2021 – 2026, being considered at Full Council in September). These themes include (1) Brighter Futures through the delivery of interventions to engage NEET young people and the provision of careers support, and (2) Safe and Pleasant Communities through targeted engagement of young people aged 16 and 17 (and those with SEND up to the age of 25) and their families in the Borough's most deprived communities / ward areas.

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough.

This is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to:

- 1) note the report; and
- 2) support the services' continued intervention to support and engage young people NEET and / or at risk of NEET.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 Providing a service to support young people NEET is a vital component and support mechanism to ensure the full discharge of the Council's statutory duty to support full participation. This service will become more important as we enter the post pandemic recovery phase with young people challenged by competition for jobs, the consequences of interrupted education and social isolation.
- 1.2 Young people presenting as NEET and seeking support are demonstrating more complex needs and barriers linked to mental health. The employment market is chaotic with national and local interventions for workless adults and young people lacking real synergy. Young people are generally discluded from larger national worklessness support programme, including Kick Start, because of strict eligibility criteria linked to benefits.
- 1.3 Overall, participation remains high with more young people accessing academic courses in school sixth forms / Birkenhead Sixth Form College and / or vocational skills-based provisions at Wirral Met College.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 In the last 4 years the 14-19 Team NEET Participation and Engagement Support Service; commissioned as a joint LCR service and delivered by Career Connect, has been charged with reducing the Not Known performance measure. The premise being that if we don't know what all of our young people are up to how can we best support their needs and get them on a pathway to a successful transition into adulthood.
- 2.2 Since the onset of Covid-19, March 2020, and the associated periods of lockdown tracking and support for Wirral post 16 young people has been a challenge. The usual activities including email, written correspondence, social media investigations, telephone calls to young people, parents and carers have provided rich evidence and have continued. What has been a challenge or inconsistent across the service has included face to face meetings and 'door knocking' activity (as part of not known tracking).
- 2.3 As we come out of lockdown 3.0 the team at Career Connect have now opened the Argyle Street office for face-to-face appointments and door knocking activity has re-commenced.
- 2.4 Feedback from NEET young people on the effects of the pandemic on their participation was gathered by Career Connect during the autumn term 2020. The top 10 key themes identified leading to NEET / preventing positive participation included:
 - Parental apathy and inability to influence progress into EET.
 - Poor attendance and absenteeism due to drug use and poor behaviours.
 - Employment is the only desired option – income.
 - Rejection of Employability Programmes, Study Programmes and traineeships

- Too low or no financial incentive.
- Bullying: intimidation; rivalry; related anxiety.
- Travel: education provision too far away from home.
- Self-Exclusion due to mental health; anxiety; deep-rooted isolation.
- Young people dropping out of College or being asked to leave due poor attendance / non-engagement and then unable to return for a period of time.
- Young people unwilling to compromise their vocational ideas and routes in to job role / employment (career destinations).

- 2.5 As illustrated in table 2 above; as at March 2021 the NEET rate of 3.7% equated to 274 young people. The percentage of young people not known in the same period (1.2%) equated to 90 young people.
- 2.6 The profile of NEET (ages 16 to 18) and the average time spent in NEET by Wirral young people (April 2021) can be seen below in table 3:

Table 3. NEET Analysis: time spent NEET by each young person in the age group 16 to 19 as at April 2021

Time Spent NEET	Active	Inactive	All	% Overall NEET
Less than 30 Days	63	13	76	16%
1-3 months	64	31	95	20%
3-6 Months	55	38	93	19%
6-12 Months	86	28	114	24%
1 Year+	60	41	101	21%
Totals	328	151	479	

(Source: NCISS, April 2021)

- 2.7 Of concern is the proportion of young people that have been 3 months plus NEET at 64 percent or 308 young people. The 14-19 Team unfortunately do not have any year-on-year comparative data due this being a bespoke report from the live NCCIS database. The intensity of the work required to support a longer-term NEET young person back into some form of EET increases exponentially with every month spent NEET.
- 2.8 An analysis of the active and inactive NEET cohorts though reports no significant long-term change with roughly 23% of the NEET cohort being inactive, i.e. the young person is a carer, has a long term health condition / illness, teen parent / pregnancy, etc...

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no immediate financial implications associated with this report. A report will be received by the Committee, 23rd October 2021, detailing planned approaches for commissioning a service to encourage, enable and assist young people to participate.

4.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

5.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 There are no resource implications arising from this report.

6.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 There are no risks to the Council arising from this report.

7.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 Career Connect have consulted with NEET young people to help inform the contents of this report.

8.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and published and can be found using the link below:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Consideration has been given to the climate emergency in the delivery of services to encourage, enable and assist young people to participate.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date