



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 7th MARCH 2023

REPORT TITLE:	REVIEW OF POST 16 EDUCATION
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

Wirral has a complex post 16 education and learning landscape. Wirral young people making the transition at age 16 into further education and training have several options and pathways including school sixth form, further education (including study programme provision) and Apprenticeships. Post 16 opportunities are accessible in borough however, young people may choose to travel to learn in a neighbouring local authority or beyond.

Young people's post 16 participation rates in the Borough are currently at or above sub-regional and regional averages. Challenges currently exist with recognised apprenticeship participation where the position is one of building back following the national pandemic and structural national changes to the apprenticeship model of delivery.

The quality of locally delivered post 16 education delivered by Wirral based further education college's, school sixth forms and independent providers is in the main rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. Wirral has one school sixth form provision inspected as requires improvement.

Levels of attainment for Wirral young people at the age of 19 are comparable to national rates at both level 2 (equivalent to 5x GCSEs at grades 4 or above) and level 3 (equivalent to A-levels or BTEC national diploma). Attainment of both levels 2 and 3 for young people from Wirral's most deprived communities has also improved in the last 3 years with the inequality attainment gap at or below national averages.

Wirral's post 16 participation rates continue to be good with some 95.8% (as of June 22) of the 16 to 18 year old cohort (7,452 young people) participating in some form of employment, education and training (EET).

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough.

This is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. note the report; and
2. support the services' plans to review the sufficiency of post 16 education options based on continued demographic growth for the next 4 to 5 years.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 Young people's participation in post-16 education, employment and training (EET) has been consistently high across the last 5 years in line with statistical neighbours. The types of post-16 employment, education and / or training (EET) opportunities young people have engaged in has varied slightly from year to year.
- 1.2 Pre-pandemic patterns of participation were very different to those during the pandemic and up to present day, for example, a greater proportion of young people stayed in school sixth form provisions during the pandemic. Patterns of young people's participation have also been impacted by national policy change, for example, the introduction of apprenticeship standards, removal of specific frameworks / levels and the introduction of the levy have all contributed to changed behaviours, opportunities, and choices for young people.
- 1.3 New T-Level curriculum, the closure of European Social Funded engagement provisions for NEET and those at risk of becoming NEET, and the proposed cessation to Traineeships will also change the mix and balance of provisions, with the potential to impact on positive participation.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 This report is based on the latest available published data. The Department for Education has continued to restrict the availability of post-16 performance indicators performance, specifically at institution level, as education settings return to normality from the national pandemic.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 National policy change in respect of curriculum is slowly impacting, specifically in respect of T-Levels with first teaching in Wirral colleges from 2021. T-Levels are sector led level 3 two-year courses with prescribed routes to employment and / or higher education. Both national and local introduction of this curricula has been cautious with limited opportunities and small numbers of young people recruited. A limited number of schools with sixth form provisions are considering T-Level delivery from September 2023.
- 3.2 The committee needs to be aware the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority is overseeing the implementation of a Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) for the sub-region. This is being developed by an employer representative body (ERB) which is both St Helens Chamber of Commerce (lead Chamber of Commerce) and Wirral Chamber of Commerce (local lead ERB). Wirral Chamber of Commerce is currently drawing on the views of Wirral employers, and other evidence bases, to summarise the skills, capabilities or expertise that are, or may in the future be, required in Wirral. Identifying actions that relevant providers can take regarding any English-funded post-16 technical education or training that they provide to address the requirements.

- 3.3 It is anticipated that the finding from the field work undertaken by the Chambers of Commerce from across the Liverpool City Region will report into the Department for Education in April 2023 and local findings shared. It is anticipated that further education colleges will need to respond to identified skills needs through local accountability agreements. Local accountability agreements will be integrated into the current Education Improvement Framework FE and Skills Handbook for 2023/24 academic year inspections.
- 3.4 Table 1. Below provides a snapshot of participation as of June 2022. This illustrates that 95.8 percent of young people aged between 16 and 18 were recorded as being in a positive EET destination.

Table 1 A Snapshot of Post-16 Participation for Young People Aged 16 to 18

	Yr 12	Yr 13	Total Cohort	% (adjustment applied)
Cohort total	3733	3719	7452	
EET Total	3624	3512	7136	95.8%
i. of which in education, post Year 11	3357	3075	6432	86.3%
a. of which in School Sixth Form	1634	1581	3215	43.1%
b. of which in Sixth Form College	657	535	1192	16.0%
c. of which in Further Education	1028	919	1947	26.1%
ii. of which in Employment	214	387	601	8.1%
a. of which in Apprenticeships	135	188	323	4.3%
iii. Training	51	49	100	1.3%
NEET Group	91	172	263	3.5%
Current situation not known	18	34	52	0.7%

(Source NCCIS, June 2022)

- 3.5 Post-16 EET applications and offers received by young people leaving compulsory education at the end of year 11 and those progressing from year 12 to 13 – reported as part of the September Guarantee performance measure - have also changed slightly year on year. The overall proportion of the cohort receiving an appropriate offer of EET has remained high at XXXX in 2021/22. In 2022/23 the proportion of offers reduced by XXXX reflecting that XX young people chose to access direct employment opportunities without training.
- 3.6 Young people's post-16 levels of attainment have improved year on year and remain above both regional and national averages. Table 2. below illustrates Wirral resident attainment at level 2 and 3 across the last 5 years at the age of 19. Please note level 2 is generally the equivalent of 5 or more GCSEs at grades 4 or above and level 3 is the equivalent of 3 A-level passes or the achievement of BTEC national diploma. National research has shown that young people attaining a level 3 have much

improved life chances and average earning over their lifetime compared to level 2 or below.

3.7 Table 2. Wirral resident attainment at level 2 and level 3 by age 19

<i>Achievement of a Level 2 Qualification by age of 19</i>				
	2018	2019	2020	2021
<i>Wirral</i>	83.80	83.30	82.40	82.30
<i>North West</i>	82.00	81.30	80.80	80.70
<i>England</i>	82.20	81.80	81.40	81.60
<i>Achievement of a L3 qualification by the age of 19</i>				
	2018	2019	2020	2021
<i>Wirral</i>	58.50	56.00	57.70	58.60
<i>North West</i>	56.90	56.30	56.20	57.90
<i>England</i>	57.40	57.10	57.70	59.80

(Source: Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT), December 2022)

- 3.8 In 2021 82.30 percent of Wirral resident young people at age 19 had attained an education level equivalent to that of level 2. This illustrates that a greater proportion of Wirral resident young people had a level 2 attainment level compared to the North West (80.70%) and England which had average achievement rates of 80.70 percent and 81.60 percent respectively.
- 3.9 At the higher achievement level (level 3) there has been a year-on-year increase in the proportions of young people achieving this higher level. A greater proportion of Wirral resident young people have attained a level 3 compared to the North West average (+0.7%) but still lag behind national performance (-1.2%).
- 3.10 Across the last 3 academic years, 2019/20 to 2021/22, outcomes for Wirral young people that have followed further education and / or training options are inconsistent. The period during the national pandemic, including academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21 impaired results due to centre assessed and teacher assessed outcomes.
- 3.11 In academic year 2021/22 1,911 young people enrolled on A-level programmes of study at secondary schools with a sixth form or at Birkenhead Sixth Form College, a recorded increase of 9 percent compared to 2019/20. Learners studying A-levels made up 71.1 percent of the post-16 learners at the end of the 2021/22 academic year. The average A-level grade achieved was B- and the proportion of the cohort that achieved the equivalent of a level 3 (2 or more A-level passes) was 84.4%.
- 3.12 The average A-level grade is in line with North West averages; however, the percentage of the cohort attaining 2 or more A-level passes is below the North West average by 2.6 percent. This reflects the blended curriculum delivered by several Wirral schools sixth forms where young people will enrol on an applied vocational qualification alongside an A-level. This is evidenced by 96.9 percent of this cohort achieving 2 or more substantial level 3 results compared to 95.9 percent across the North West.

- 3.13 In the same academic year (2021/22) 779 young people also enrolled on applied vocational programmes at level 3 (including Level 3 BTEC qualifications). Enrolments for these qualifications will come from school sixth forms, further education colleges and independent private providers. The average applied general qualification outcome was a Distinction. This very high level of outcome remains constant across the last 3 previous academic years.
- 3.14 Wirral young people accessing apprenticeships is building back after the national pandemic with increasing participation and numbers of new starters. Table 3. below illustrates the numbers of young people aged 16 to 18 starting an apprenticeship over the last 3 academic years by level of apprenticeship.
- 3.15 Table 3. Key statistics for Wirral resident 16–18-year-olds participating in Apprenticeships between 2019/20 and 2021/22

		Academic Year		
		2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Total	Achievements	280	240	160
	Participation	720	660	750
	Starts	400	380	490
Advanced Apprenticeship	Achievements	110	110	100
	Participation	330	320	380
	Starts	190	190	240
Higher Apprenticeship	Achievements	10	10	10
	Participation	30	20	30
	Starts	30	20	30
Intermediate Apprenticeship	Achievements	160	120	60
	Participation	370	340	340
	Starts	180	180	220

(Source: Department for Education Performance Statistics, December 2022)

- 3.16 The increase in the number of new apprenticeship starters is very positive at 28.8% (an additional 110 young people) between 2020/21 and 2021/22. Due to the lag between an apprentice starting (with a minimum duration of 12 months) I expect to see the numbers of achievers grow in 2022/23 reflecting the increased participation level.
- 3.17 Destination measure data published as part of the Department for Education outcome driven performance measures illustrates that in 2020/21 (latest available data) 80.3 percent of Wirral learners exiting state funded school sixth form or FE college provisions progressed to sustained destination (either education, employment or an apprenticeship). This count included data from 3,152 Wirral resident young people aged 16 to 18. Those young people classed as in a sustained destination will have been in their destination for greater than 6 months.
- 3.18 Compared to the North West averages Wirral residents are more likely to enter a sustained post-16 education destination (55.9% up by +1.5% against NW), access a UK Higher Education Institution (42.2 percent up by +6.8% against NW averages),

however, Wirral young people are slightly less likely to sustain an employment outcome at 18.3 percent compared to 19.2 percent for Northwest.

- 3.19 Further detailed institution focus performance analysis is limited due the lack of detailed DfE published performance data. It is anticipated that further performance data will become available in 2023/24 reflecting young people's achievements as education post-16 performance reverts to more familiar and full reporting.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implication to be noted relating to this report. Commission and funding of post-16 education is the responsibility of the Department for Education and / or Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. The only Council funded post-16 is with the Council's maintained secondary schools that have a sixth form.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 There are no resource implications arising from this report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 Having sufficient and appropriate local provision for young people over compulsory school age but under 19 or aged 19 to 25 and for whom an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan is maintained is imperative to the Council. This is one of the legal duty's imposed on councils under the Education Act 1996 and forms part of the Raising of the Participation Age legislation.
- 7.2 To reduce this risk the Council 14-19 Service tracks and monitors the participation of all young people post-16 in scope of this legislation. Monitoring is weekly and is supported by the Council's commissioned participation and engagements services delivered by Career Connect.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Proposed National Policy in respect of traineeships will as proposed impact on local post-16 participation. Traineeships provide an entry point for young people seeking apprenticeships or employment but are lacking key employability skills.
- 8.2 Current policy is proposing that Traineeships cease to be funded as a standalone provision and be subsumed and funded as study programme provisions. This proposed approach could negatively impact on those learning providers that do not currently have a contract to deliver study programmes, for example, The Engineering College, Birkenhead.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Consideration of the climate emergency is a key consideration in the delivery of post-16 education from delivery locations and facilities to the inclusion of environment and climate in the curriculum taught across post 16.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Sufficient and appropriate local post-16 education and training opportunities for all Wirral resident young people is fundamental. Young people must be able to develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours required to enable them to have successful, prosperous careers and support local economic growth.

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APPENDICES

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022
FE and Skills Handbook, Ofsted
Local Skills Improvement Plans, .GOV.UK

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Children, Young People and Education Committee in accordance with Section B of its Terms of Reference:

(b) the functions and powers conferred on or exercisable by the Council as Local Authority in relation to the provision of education.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date