

NEET progress report

Purpose of this Report

1. To update Members on the position regarding NEET amongst young people in Wiltshire and the actions being taken to achieve reduced levels

Introduction

2. NEET is the acronym for those young people Not in Education, Employment or Training¹
3. It was introduced a decade ago as a measure of non-participation by young people in structured opportunities (such as further education or vocational training) following completion of their compulsory education.
4. Data on the current activities and participation of young people aged 16-19 is recorded on an ongoing basis by the Connexions Service: this is reported monthly to the Department for Education (DfE) and is the source of the NEET measure for Wiltshire
5. 16-18 year old NEET is one of the national performance indicators (NI 117), one of the measures making up the Public Service Agreement (PSA) 14, the aim of which is *"to increase the number of young people on the path to success"*.

Key features of NEET

6. NEET is not a static measure: the NEET "population" fluctuates constantly as young people enter or leave employment or enrol on education or training programmes. As a result there is a discernible annual cycle of rising and falling NEET, generally reflecting the main periods of the year when young people leave and join further education, overlaid by seasonal variations.
7. Young people may become NEET on more than one occasion and they may remain NEET for varying periods of time; the average duration of NEET amongst 16-18 year olds is 25 weeks - this reduces to an average of 20 weeks if young mothers who are NEET are excluded from the data.

¹ NEET in this report refers to 16-18 year old NEET as measured by NI 117. NEET as a measure was developed about 10 years ago as a measure of participation amongst 16-19 year olds and is reported on by Connexions Services whose remit is for 13-19 year olds. However, recent references to NEET in the media and government have started using the term generically for those in older age groups but particularly 18-24 year olds who are unemployed. The official measures will be those recorded by Jobcentre Plus (Dept Work and pensions) of jobseekers and claimants (unemployed). Responsibility for this age group rests with the DWP and not the LA

8. In Wiltshire there are roughly equal proportions of males and females within the NEET population. As a general rule the incidence of NEET amongst 16 to 18 year olds increases with age.
9. Levels of NEET vary across the County. The community areas where NEET numbers are numerically highest include Chippenham, Salisbury and Trowbridge, although significant concentrations are evident in Tisbury, Tidworth, Wilton and Westbury. Identifiable “hotspots” at ward level include Westbury Ham, Salisbury Bemerton, Trowbridge Drynham, John of Gaunt, Warminster West and Melksham North.
10. The incidence of NEET is significantly higher amongst young people who are vulnerable or have other difficulties such as those who are looked after, teenage mothers, have or are at risk of offending, or have disabilities

Importance of NEET reduction

11. The under-achievement and unfulfilled potential of young people who are NEET is self evident and, given that the incidence is higher amongst vulnerable groups, there is also an equalities perspective to be addressed.
12. There is clear correlation between the incidence of NEET and of antisocial behaviour, substance misuse and offending. Tackling NEET is likely to have a beneficial impact on some of these related issues.
13. The average economic cost of each person NEET over their lifetime has been estimated at almost £100,000. As this is an average, there will be many individuals for whom the cost will be substantially greater. These costs include lowered contributions and additional support required as a result of unemployment and underachievement, poor health, substance misuse, and involvement with crime running to billions of pounds. There is clearly therefore an economic incentive to reduce NEET.
14. 16 –18 year old NEET (NI 117) reduction is included within the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and Local Agreement for Wiltshire (LAW) and as such is one of the measures of Council performance.
15. Successfully reducing NEET is a key element in preparing for the raising of the participation age (RPA) to age 17 (in 2013) and 18 (in 2015)

Current NEET level and trends

16. The 16-18 year old NEET target for Wiltshire is 4.1% (of the 16-18 year old population), measured as an average of the 3 monthly outturns for November, December and January.
17. A significant decrease in employment opportunities for young people resulting from the economic downturn has impacted upon NEET levels. Following a rise in 2008/9, there has been a trend of gradually reducing NEET amongst 16-18 olds evident in the last 12 month period. This is illustrated at Annexe 1
18. Notwithstanding this reducing trend there has been an unexpected upturn in NEET since March. This is largely due to one training provider terminating a large number of

individuals, and also completers from an FE course of less than a full academic year duration.

19. The most recent reported figure (May 2010) shows NEET standing at 6.2%, representing 644 young people. This compares with 6.4% (680 young people) in May 2009.

Actions to address NEET

20. An annually updated NEET Reduction Strategy and Action Plan is in place to guide and monitor activities to reduce the level of NEET amongst young people. Key elements of this Plan include:

- Rigorous tracking activities to ensure awareness of those young people who are NEET as a basis for providing support and assistance. This includes caseloading of all NEET young people to a Connexions Personal Adviser, conducting a frequent and regular programme of interviews of those who are NEET, maintaining contact via telephone, selective use of call centre arrangements at some periods in the year, backed up by home visits to those who do not respond to other attempts at maintaining contact. Personal advisers endeavour to work closely with other agencies supporting young people who may be NEET such as aftercare or Youth Offending Services, opportunity providers such as Wiltshire College or other training providers, Voluntary Sector providers, benefits agencies and Jobcentre Plus
- Provision of advice and guidance to assist young people's progression into available learning and work opportunities:
All NEET young people 16-18 are supported by Connexions Personal Advisers to assess their needs, develop their motivation and set goals; develop their understanding of the local employment and learning options; provide employment and training vacancy information; assistance to access work opportunities including CV preparation; referrals to pre-apprenticeship programmes such as E2E and Foundation Learning; liaising with and referring to other support agencies as required;
Intensive personal adviser support is provided for young people in identified vulnerable groups or who have multiple difficulties or barriers to overcome, encouraging them to engage and to participate in available opportunities
- Developing and commissioning suitable and flexible provision to ensure that the needs of all young people can be accommodated.

21. In recognition of the heightened risk and incidence of NEET amongst vulnerable young people additional support is being provided through the creation of personal adviser roles working specifically with groups such as looked after children and those at risk of offending. Other changes within the Department such as the creation of the new Targeted Services area will ensure that there is earlier identification of young people at greatest risk of NEET and improved support provided jointly by services.

22. A number of other strategic plans and actions are also in place that include NEET reduction as a key feature, thereby ensuring a coherent and corporate approach by the Council and its partners to addressing this issue. These include:

- Inclusion of NEET reduction as a key priority within the Children and Young People's Plan (Children and Young People's Trust Board), encompassing targeted support for NEET, achievement of September and January Guarantees;

- Inclusion of NEET reduction activities as a priority within the Department for Children and Education Plan;
- The Wiltshire Work and Skills Plan, a partnership plan led by the Economy and Enterprise Service
- The 13-19 Strategy and Implementation Plan, including the provision and support to prevent NEET
- Activities arising from the Action for Wiltshire Initiative. These include provision of mentoring support for NEET young people through senior leaders within the Council, initially Service Directors, and the development of work experience provision for NEET young people via local employers. An additional support and progression pathway to be jointly delivered by Connexions and Wiltshire College is under development
- Adoption of recommendations set out in the South West Councils Review of NEET. Amongst those aimed at Local Authorities to help prevent and tackle NEET are:
 - The need to make full use of information about the needs of young people and knowledge of the local economy as a basis for commissioning provision and support;
 - The need to ensure sufficient advice and guidance capacity to support the progression of young people;
 - Enabling participation of the third sector in delivering NEET support services;
 - Involvement of the Local Authority as an employer in providing work experience and apprenticeship opportunities.

23. The Connexions Service is funded through the Area Based Grant (ABG) and recent changes in central government policy direction have seen the overall grant funding available reduced by 24% in year for 2010-11. The Department for Children and Education is looking at where savings can be achieved and the impact on priority areas will be assessed.

Recommendation

24. That the Committee note and comment as appropriate on this report.

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Unpublished documents relied upon in the production of this Report: NONE

Environmental impact of the recommendations contained in this Report: NONE KNOWN

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Wiltshire NEET %

