

Wiltshire Council

Council

10 July 2012

Questions From Councillors

From Cllr Jon Hubbard, Melksham South Division

To

Cllr Lionel Grundy, Cabinet Member For Children's Services

Question 1

Department of Education figures show that in 2011 Wiltshire had the highest proportion of 16-18 year olds not in employment education and training amongst the counties of the South West. Wiltshire also has the highest percentage of young people between the ages of 16 and 18 for whom no activity is known (17% overall and 36% in the case of 18 year olds). Given that the Council retains a statutory duty "to enable, encourage and assist young people's participation in education and training", what steps are this administration taking:

- a. To help improve the situation in Wiltshire for school leavers?
- b. To help compensate for the loss of the Educational Maintenance Allowance and the disbanding of the Connexions advice service?
- c. To ensure better collection of NEET data under the new devolved arrangements?

Response

NEET Performance:

Wiltshire's annual NEET figure for 2011 was 6.3%.

The monthly NEET figure for Wiltshire in May 2012 was 5.4%. This is a reduction on the same period last year when the figure was 5.9%. In May 2012 there were 751 young people NEET.

It is important to note that 2011 data cannot be compared with that published in previous years because significant changes have been made to the information collected in preparation for the Government's commitment to raise the participation age. 2011 figures:

- i) Relate to young people resident in the local area. Data for previous years was related to the area in which the young person was attending school or college.
- ii) Relate to the young person's academic age; i.e. their age on 1st September 2011. Data for previous years was based on calendar age. This is in line with other statistical collections and has the effect of increasing the number and percentage of NEET.

A report on Youth Unemployment, NEET & Support for Young People to move into Employment and Training was presented to the Public Services Board on 26th April 2012. The report provides detail on the cross cutting and extensive work that is underway across the Council and its partners to support young people to move into employment and training.

Not Known Performance:

The not known figure refers to 16-18 year olds whose activity is not known. For example, whether they are on a full-time college course, in a job etc.

In 2011 Wiltshire's not known figure was 16.5%.

In May 2012 the not known figure was 10.8% Tracking involves internal and external partners including Integrated Youth, Jobcentre Plus, schools and post-16 learning providers.

A number of steps have been taken to support improvements to tracking and reducing our not known figure;

- A former member of Connexions staff has been seconded into a Tracking Coordinator role.
- A Tracking Coordination Plan has been developed and is being implemented.
- Information Sharing arrangements have been reviewed and strengthened with relevant internal and external partners.

a) **What steps are the administration taking to help improve the situation in Wiltshire for school leavers?**

Targeted Personal Advisors within the Integrated Youth Service are continuing to provide information, advice and guidance to school leavers. This will continue until September 2012 when the delivery of careers guidance to all pupils will become the responsibility of schools (for which schools have been funded by central Government).

The Local Authority continues to fulfil its duty to encourage, enable or assist young people's participation in education or training through work with partners, including:

- The Integrated Youth Service assisting the most vulnerable young people and those at risk of disengaging with education or work. This includes carrying out Learning Difficulty Assessments for young people with a learning difficulty and/or disability.
- Ensuring that eligible 16 and 17 year olds have received an offer of a suitable place in post-16 education or training, and that they are assisted to take up a place. This is called the September Guarantee which is coordinated by the Integrated Youth Service.
- The new Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is providing strategic leadership for the Employment & Skills agenda in the local area. One of its key priorities includes delivering Apprenticeship growth and maximising take-up.
- As part of the Wiltshire Strategic Economic Partnership (now Enterprise Wiltshire) the Employment & Skills Board (ESB) is the delivery arm for the employment & skills agenda in Wiltshire. Delivery of work for the ESB is undertaken by two sub groups, Wiltshire Works and the Apprenticeship sub group. The former involves a number of partners working together to address worklessness, whilst the latter is focused on driving up Apprenticeship growth in the county. Wiltshire Works is currently supporting the development of an employability and informal skills development programme for young people. This is being supported with funding from the Council. A Work and Skills Plan is also in place with a focus on reducing worklessness and promoting economic inclusion. It places an emphasis on support for key groups including young people who are NEET and Looked After Children.
- An Apprenticeship Action Plan is being implemented which has a key objective of increasing the proportion of 16-18 year olds participating in Apprenticeships.
- The Employment and Skills Board has supported the following initiatives for young people:

Delivered for Young People:

- 5,150 'Have a Go' workplace skills activities undertaken by young people during Apprenticeship Week (Feb 2012)
- 495 jobs created for out of work young people
- 300 Work Experience opportunities created for unemployed young people
- 169 people (aged 16+) across Wiltshire and Swindon supported with travel to work/training
- 136 EET outcomes for 13-17 year olds at risk of offending or NEET
- 100 new Apprenticeship enrolments including the creation of 52 new jobs through Wiltshire's first Apprenticeship Campaign
- In-Council Apprenticeship Programme launched
- Wiltshire Council awarded the 2010 JCP (South West) award for a major employer's contribution to supporting youth employment

Current Initiatives to Support Young People:

- 1000 Apprenticeships to be created through Wiltshire's second Apprenticeship Campaign
- 350 Work Experience opportunities to be created specifically for unemployed young people
- 150 further Work Experience opportunities and 30 new jobs to be created for JSA/ESA customers aged 18 years + who are not currently supported by other initiatives. Individuals will also receive support with overcoming personal and employment barriers and personal development mentoring and job coaching to support progression into employment
- 100+ unemployed young people supported into work through Sector Based Work Academies
- 62 further EET outcomes for 13-17 year olds at risk of offending or NEET
- Self-employment advice and support to start a new business through the Wiltshire Business Support Service linking in with relevant Government 'Get Britain Working' initiatives such as the Enterprise Allowance and Enterprise Clubs and the recently announced Enterprise Loans under the Youth Investment Fund
- Development of volunteering opportunities for young people to assist with the development of transferable skills, experience and increase employability
- Encouraging the establishment of more community led Work Clubs

Planned Initiatives to Support Young People:

- 350 disadvantaged 14 and 15 year olds across Wiltshire and Swindon supported to participate and succeed in education or training in order to achieve better future employment outcomes subject to a successful bid to the DWP Innovation Fund
 - 275 individuals (aged 16+) benefitting from in-work/self employed support services for a period of between 9 and 18 months for employees who have recently gained employment/entered self-employment following a period of unemployment to help them sustain that employment/achieve career advancement subject to a successful bid to Channel Programme (INTERREG)
 - 30 Work Placements created abroad subject to a successful bid to Leonardo Mobility 2012 for young unemployed people to gain vital experience of the work environment and enable them to broaden their life experience and confidence
 - Further development of the In-Council Apprenticeship Programme to provide opportunities for Looked After Children/NEET
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- The 11-19 Commissioning Strategy and Implementation Plan includes a priority related to supporting young people to move into employment and training. A number of high level actions have recently been

identified in collaboration with partners to support delivery of the commissioning priority mentioned above.

- A Partnership NEET Reduction Action Plan has been developed and is being implemented.
- A Raising Participation Age Strategy and Plan has been developed which sets out the actions which are required in order to secure full participation for 17 year olds by 2013 and 18 year olds by 2015. As part of the plan a Risk of NEET Indicator Tool has been developed to help identify young people in schools who are at risk of NEET so that they can be supported much earlier.
- The Integrated Youth Service has recently funded a number of specific local based projects within community areas to support young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming so.

b) What steps are the local authority taking to help compensate for the loss of the Educational Maintenance Allowance and the disbanding of the Connexions advice service?

The Connexions Service has not been disbanded in Wiltshire. Instead the Service has been realigned in the light of changes to the delivery of careers advice in September 2012.

Remaining staff from the former Connexions Service continue to work with and support young people who are NEET and/or are at risk of becoming so. This involves supporting vulnerable school leavers to make a successful transition from pre to post-16 learning. Many of the initiatives mentioned earlier will help to compensate for the removal of the EMA. However in addition to these:

- A government Bursary Fund is available to support young people who are vulnerable in post-16 learning and colleges have use of a discretionary fund to support the most in need post-16 learners.
- The provision of careers guidance from schools and the National Careers Service will encourage young people to continue to participate in learning.
- The Raising of the Participation Age to 17 in 2013 and 18 by 2015 will mean that young people continue in learning for longer and this should help to increase participation rates and reduce NEET.
- Further development of the In-Council Apprenticeship Programme is being considered to provide opportunities for Looked After Children/NEET.
- The Integrated Youth Service is funding a range of small scale projects across Wiltshire focussed on targeting those young people who are NEET/at risk of NEET and supporting them into education, employment or training.

c) What steps are the local authority taking to ensure better collection of NEET data under the new devolved arrangements?

- The Council has set up new information sharing protocols with the following:
 - Schools, including academies
 - Post-16 learning providers, including colleges
 - Education Funding Agency
 - Jobcentre Plus
 - The Data Service (Apprenticeship data)
- Appointment of a tracking co-ordinator to oversee the collection and recording of the activity/destinations of young people aged 16-19.
- Working with relevant staff within the Integrated Youth Service so that they fully understand their responsibilities in relation to tracking work. Requirements in relation to tracking are being clarified through the development and implementation of a specification for the Integrated Youth Service.
- Exploring the option of taking on a young apprentice to work alongside the tracking coordinator to develop innovative approaches for tracking, including use of social networking and applications.
- Will have introduced by September 2012 a new electronic single case management system across the whole of the Integrated Youth Service

Mal Munday

Head of Service

Integrated Youth

James Fortune

Lead Commissioner 11-19

Commissioning Team

5th July 2012.