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MERTHYR TUDFUL
MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council

CABINET REPORT

Date Written	10 th August 2018
Report Author	Chris Hole/Samantha Morgan
Service Area	Community Wellbeing
Committee Division	Portfolio
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	26 th September 2018

To: *Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen*

NEET's Prevention and Performance

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The report outlines how the local authority has performed with regards to NEET prevention and how it supports those young people identified through the Early Identification Toolkit (EIT) as the highest risk of becoming NEET.
- 1.2 The report also provides an update on the progress of the Inspire to Achieve (I2A) and Inspire to Work (I2W) regional European funded projects, which have been in operation since April 2016 and November 2016 respectively. At pre-16, I2A is the local authority's main source of lead working support to young people identified as the highest risk of becoming NEET.
- 1.3 For the post 16 cohort (16-24), I2W is one of a variety of employment projects managed by the Local Authority (Bridges Into Work, Communities 4 Work and now Communities 4 Work Plus) and independent provision operating in the local authority area. The report looks at the I2W contribution to the NEET and youth unemployment figures for 16-24 year olds in Merthyr Tydfil.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that

- 2.1 The contents of the report are noted.
- 2.2 An update on the progress of the new NEET Strategy 2018-20 is provided within the 2019 report to council as the strategy will then have been in place for a year.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Since implementation of the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF) and development of a local NEET Strategy, the local authority has consistently performed well in relation to the number of young people becoming NEET when they leave school at 16. The longer term impact of this support can also be demonstrated through the sustained reduction in unemployment of the 16-24 age group.
- 3.2 Additionally, and in line with the YEPF, since 2013 the local authority has utilised a system of early identification of young people at risk of NEET. The EIT is the primary method for determining eligibility for the Pre 16 European funded programme. Over the years, this Early Identification Toolkit (EIT) has developed from a paper based system to an electronic system and is currently administered through the local authority Capita One database.
- 3.3 The Capita one system also records data on attendance, behaviour and attainment of children and young people and is therefore a more efficient method of early identification, as it can be run periodically through the year. Following the most recent review of the EIT it was recommended that the system is developed further and implemented at the end of Key Stage 2 in order to identify children who may benefit from enhanced support during the transition from primary to secondary school.
- 3.4 There is a richer source of data being collated into this single system than previously available. Flying Start data is now incorporated into the database and the potential to use this system in a number of areas to track and assess the impact of interventions is currently being explored across departments. Developing the ability of the local authority to demonstrate and evaluate the impact of programmes on young people's attendance, behaviour and attainment will enable service areas to make better informed judgements about future investment of resources in line with the requirements of Youth Support Service Estyn inspections.

4.0 CAREERS WALES DESTINATION SURVEY OUTCOMES 2017

- 4.1 For 2017 the published Welsh Government NEET figure for Merthyr Tydfil was 1.3%, equating to 7 young people. This placed the local authority in joint 5th position, which was down from joint first for 2016 when the figure was 1.03% (6 young people). This demonstrates the impact one additional person can have on Merthyr's ranking due to the size of the cohort involved. However, this is still above the Welsh average for 2017 of 1.6%. For the fifth year in a row there were no young people with an unknown destination in Merthyr Tydfil.
- 4.2 Table 1 provides the trend in performance for Merthyr Tydfil since 2012 and from 2013 when the YEPF was introduced across Wales.

Table 1

NEET % - Year 11 Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council – Trend Data					
2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
6.2% (44 yp)	1.87% (13 yp)	2.6% (16 yp)	1.6% (10 yp)	1.03% (6 yp)	1.3% (7 yp)

All Wales: 4.2%	All Wales: 3.7%	All Wales: 3.1%	All Wales: 3.1%	All Wales: 2.0%	All Wales: 1.6%
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- 4.3 Since 2016 these figures have not included young people who are registered on the EOTAS plasc, so for 2017 there were an additional 4 young people who were NEET but not included in the published figure. However, during Year 11 these young people were tracked by the NEET team and either offered or received support to access a post 16 opportunity from relevant projects and partners, such as Careers Wales.
- 4.4 This success has carried through to the older age group and there has been a significant improvement in the 16-24 year old youth unemployment figure over the same period. At year ending March 2018 (Stats Wales), the annual population survey identified that the unemployment rate for 16-24 year olds in Merthyr Tydfil was 13.5% (600), equalling the Welsh Average. This figure has decreased by 23.4% since 2012 meaning Merthyr Tydfil's improvement has been at an accelerated pace in comparison to the rest of Wales, which improved at a rate of 10.4% over the same period. However this figure is based upon a survey which the publisher has warned is as of low quality due to the number of responses to the survey.
- 4.5 Significant data development is taking place nationally around unemployment statistics meaning that the latest specific data for the 16-24 age group relates to 2017. This data demonstrated that the claimant count for Job Seekers Allowance was 95 individuals for those aged under 25, equating to an unemployment rate of 13.6%. This figure has also decreased at an accelerated pace since 2012 when Merthyr Tydfil youth unemployment rate by claimant count was identified as 34.3% or 810 young people. Experimental data for stats Wales puts this decrease into context when looking at the entire claimant count (16-64) population of 950 individuals and a claimant count rate of 2.5%.

5.0 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEET SCHOOL LEAVERS 2017

- 5.1 An analysis of the 11 young people who were NEET at the point of the Careers Wales destination survey took place and each young person displayed one or more of the following:
- Nine were ragged 'red' and two were ragged as 'green'.
 - Eight were identified as having an additional learning need or behavioural difficulty (one young person was statemented, one was on School Action and six were on School Action plus) with three of this group having the most significant barriers to entering employment, education or training.
 - Four attended an alternative curriculum programme such as EOTAS or Special Tuition.
 - Following referral to I2A, six either never engaged or refused to engage with the support offered by the project.
 - Four had engaged in an opportunity after leaving school, prior to the destination survey deadline (three in work-based learning, one in college). A further 3 had intended destinations on leaving school which they did not enter.

6.0 POSITION STATEMENT 2018 SCHOOL LEAVERS

- 6.1 As a result of early identification and the work of the school NEET panels, 97 Year 11 young people have been supported and tracked over the academic year 2017-18. Through transition planning, 91 have an intended destination, with 6 young people having no intended destination and, therefore, deemed to be at highest risk of NEET. These young people have been discussed at the post 16 NEET Practitioner Group so that support can be offered via the range of post 16 employment partners, based upon the needs of the young person.
- 6.2 A focus during this academic year has been to improve the number of identified 'high risk NEET' young people leaving school with a transition plan in place, and therefore being able to confirm their intended destination. At the same point in 2017, there were 21 out of 84 'at risk' young people without a transition plan. This significant improvement has been achieved through improved partnership working between I2A lead workers and Careers Wales careers advisers.
- 6.3 Through a 'keeping in touch', strategy a further 25 out of the 97 will be supported during the summer and autumn periods to ensure they enter a destination and maintain this destination, as they are considered 'at risk of becoming NEET'.

7.0 INSPIRE PROJECTS – PROGRESS TO DATE

- 7.1 Both Inspire 2 Achieve (pre16) and Inspire 2 Work (post 16) have received approval from the Wales European Funding Office (WEFO) to extend until 30th November 2022. As a result, a re-profile exercise has recently been completed for both programmes with the new profile and achievements for I2A set out in Table 2 below and for I2W set out in section 7.6 below.

Table 2 - Inspire 2 Achieve

Performance Measure	Cumulative Target	Achieved	Variance
No. enrolled	377	339	-38
No. supported into EET	83	115	+32
No. at reduced risk of NEET	206	14 (25 to be claimed)	-192
No. gaining qualifications	29	7 (22 to be claimed)	29

- 7.2 During 2016-17 academic year 70 out of 84 Year 11 young people identified as 'high risk NEET' were supported by I2A with the project supporting 68 to enter further education, employment or training. Only 2 young people supported by the programme went on to become NEET after support. The project therefore continues to make a significant contribution to the local authority NEET figure and provides a valuable transition mechanism for those requiring continued support at post 16.
- 7.3 Achievement of the 'reduction in risk of NEET' target is proving challenging both locally and regionally (27% behind profile) mainly due to the stringent evidencing requirements for claiming this outcome. Currently there are three separate

requirements that have to be met to claim this outcome including a 10% improvement in a young person's attendance. The evidencing requirement is due to the acknowledgement locally, regionally and by WEFO that often such significant changes or improvements cannot be achieved in isolation and may be attributable to the work of a range of partners or due to external factors.

7.4 Analysis of attendance data for the 2016-17 Year 11 group receiving support from I2A (70) using the education Capita System has revealed that

- 46% improved their attendance (15 by up to 9% and 17 over 10%)
- 7% there was no significant change
- 40% attendance decreased
- 7% no data recorded on Capita as they were on alternative provision such as EOTAS and Special Tuition.

7.5 The Inspire Regional Management Team (RMT) have raised concerns around the Merthyr Tydfil project focusing too much on Key Stage 4 outcomes and are requesting for more resource to be allocated to Key Stage 3 (years 7,8,9). This would place more of a focus on reducing the risk factors associated with being NEET. However, this approach would in tandem reduce the support available for high risk young people making the transition from school to a post 16 destination with a possible impact being a rise in the NEET figure. This issue continues to be discussed at a regional partnership level, with delivery continuing as normal.

7.6 The performance for the Inspire to Work programme is outlined in table 3 below. The success that has been seen since 2012 in reducing the number of young people unemployed is extremely positive for all, but does mean that funded programmes face a challenge in engaging enough individuals to achieve all of their targets due to:

- a reduction in number of unemployed 16-24 year olds as outlined in 4.4 and 4.5.
- the number of post 16 NEET and employment focused projects in operation across Merthyr Tydfil, which continues to grow.

Table 3

Performance Measure	Target	Achieved	Variance
No. enrolled	136	99	-37
No. entering employment	23	15	-5
No. gaining a qualification	48	43	-11
No. entering education/ training	25	14	-8

7.7 At present, this is being mitigated in part by the adoption of a post 16 protocol which, through a person centred approach, aims to allocate young people to projects based on their need. This process is managed through the Post 16 NEET Practitioner Group, chaired by Careers Wales and has recently been expanded to include the new Communities 4 Work plus programme. This protocol and process was established between a number of programmes due to the complexity of the

employment support landscape and attempts to mitigate against the risks of financial clawback in relation to a number of European funded programmes.

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 It has been identified that there are currently no financial implications associated with this report.
- 8.2 Wales European Funding Office (WEFO) has agreed to the extension of both I2A and I2W until 30th November 2022.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) form has been prepared for the purpose of this report. It has been found that a full assessment is not required at this time. The form can be accessed on the Council's website/intranet via the 'Equality Impact Assessment' link.

SUE WALKER
CHIEF OFFICER LEARNING

COUNCILLOR LISA MYTTON
CABINET MEMBER FOR LEARNING

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		No

Consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.