



## **CABINET – INFORMATION REPORT**

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Report Author	Samantha Morgan, Chris Hole
Service Area	Learning Department
Exempt/Non-Exempt	Non-Exempt
Committee Date	14 <sup>th</sup> July 2021

To: *Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen*

# **Prevention and Performance of Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET's)**

## **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 continues to support those young people identified through the Early Identification Toolkit (EIT) as the highest risk of becoming NEET.
- 1.2 The report provides an update on the progress of the third year of the NEET Strategy 2018-21 and the key priorities to be taken forward into the current year, which will inform the future strategic approach.

## **2.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Since 2013 the local authority has generally demonstrated a good performance in relation to reduction in the number of Year 11 young people becoming NEET when they leave school at 16. However, there has been an increase in the number of young people becoming NEET over the last two years.
- 2.2 At post-16, the impact of the pandemic is still emerging, although it is anticipated that young people will be disproportionately affected. There is a clear risk that more young people aged 16-18 may become NEET in the months ahead. This will be monitored with the support of Careers Wales.
- 2.3 However, when analysing the April 2021 data within the Careers Wales 5 Tier System, which covers the cohorts which left school in 2019 and 2020, the following can be demonstrated:

- 85% of young people remain in provision (1109) with a further 9% (124) identified as being at risk of dropping out.
- 1% (12) are actively seeking training/employment and a further 3% (41) are known to be NEET and offered support, with 1.5% (20) refusing to engage with any providers or support services.

2.4 Data on Stats Wales shows that in December 2020 the employment rate for 16–24 year-olds in Merthyr Tydfil was 52.6% compared to 50.6% for Wales. This was lower than at December 2019 when it was 55.3% in Merthyr Tydfil and 53.6% for Wales.

2.5 When examining 16-24 year-olds claiming universal credit, the number rose from 746 in February 2020 to 1362 in December 2020 and then went down to 1311 in April 2021 (figures provided by JCP).

2.6 The current NEET strategy has the following key objectives:

- Continue to ensure effective early identification at pre and post 16
- Maintain and improve the brokerage and co-ordination of support
- Ensure provision meets the needs of young people
- Strengthen employability skills and opportunities for employment and training

### 3.0 OUTCOMES OF CAREERS WALES DESTINATION SURVEY 2020

3.1 For 2020, the published Welsh Government NEET figure in Merthyr Tydfil was 2.7%, equating to 14 young people. This is higher than 2019 figure which was 2.1%, (11 young people). Table 1 provides the trend in performance for Merthyr Tydfil from 2016 to 2020.

Table 1

<b>NEET % - Year 11 Trend Data Merthyr Tydfil</b>				
<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
1.03% (6 yp)	1.3%(7 yp)	1.1% (6 yp)	2.1% (11yp)	2.7% (14yp)
<b>All Wales: 2.0%</b>	<b>All Wales: 1.6%</b>	<b>All Wales: 1.6%</b>	<b>All Wales: 1.8%</b>	<b>All Wales: 1.7%</b>

3.2 The Wales average for NEET increased from 1.6% in 2018 to 1.8% in 2019 and fell back to 1.7% in 2020.

3.3 Since 2012, in Merthyr Tydfil, there have been no Year 11 leavers with an ‘unknown’ destination, apart from in 2018 when there was one young person in this category. This was attributed to national issues around GDPR beyond the control of the local authority.

3.4 The local authority is only one of two currently across Wales that had no young people with an ‘unknown’ destination in 2020, which demonstrates that tracking and monitoring processes are robust, which enables appropriate support to be offered to young people.

3.5 The number of young people across Wales with an ‘unknown’ destination has increased from 0.5% in 2017 to 0.9% in 2020.

- 3.6 There has been discussion at a national level about the additional resources allocated to tracking and monitoring young people who disengage or do not respond to the offer of support and these views have been expressed during the current Welsh Government review of the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework. As previously informed, Careers Wales no longer conduct an intensive search and this may have contributed towards the increase in the all Wales figure of 0.9%.
- 3.7 This has resulted in a greater allocation of local authority resources to tracking young people, which the local authority is not required to monitor under the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework guidance.
- 3.8 In 2020 there were an additional eight young people who were NEET, but not included in the published figure above as they were Educated Other Than At School (EOTAS) and, therefore, are not included on the main PLASC return, which reflects national requirements. This is down from 14 young people in 2019.
- 3.9 When including these young people, the overall NEET figure has reduced from 4.3% in 2019 (25 young people) to 3.9% in 2020 (22 young people).

#### **4.0 CHARACTERISTICS OF 2020 SCHOOL LEAVERS WHO BECAME NEET**

- 4.1 Closer analysis of the 22 young people who were NEET at the point of the Careers Wales destination survey on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020 reveals that nine young people had no identified significant barriers to entering education, employment or training. This meant these young people received no additional support during Year 11.
- 4.2 A follow-up analysis of this group of nine young people was undertaken and once again no significant barriers were identified meaning their classification within the vulnerability profiling and monitoring during school was accurate.
- 4.3 The remaining 13 young people who became NEET were categorised as being at risk of NEET during Year 11 as follows:
- 11 were categorised 'red'
  - two were categorised 'amber'
- 4.4 Further analysis of this cohort of 13 young people reveals that:
- Four young people refused to engage with support.
  - One young person had a work-based learning start date after 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020.
  - One young person dropped out of their initial destination.
  - Two young people were unable to engage in EET due to medical conditions.
  - Three young people had significant mental health issues.
  - One young person was pregnant and declined support.
  - One young person was a care experienced young person.

## 5.0 OBSERVATIONS

- 5.1 There has been a significant increase in the number of young people categorised as 'green' becoming NEET, from two in 2018 and 2019 to nine in 2020.
- 5.2 The percentage of young people on EOTAS programmes becoming NEET has decreased from the spike of 26% in 2019 to 17.7% in 2020, meaning over 80% of our most vulnerable young people achieved a positive destination post school. This has brought the figure back in line with that seen in 2017. However, in 2020 there is over double the number of young people within the cohort.

Table 2

Year	No. on EOTAS Plasc	% NEET
<b>2016-17</b>	22	18% (4 yp)
<b>2017-18</b>	40	22.5% (9 yp)
<b>2018-19</b>	53	26.4% (14yp)
<b>2019-20</b>	45	17.7% (8 yp)

- 5.3 As proposed in last year's Cabinet Information report on NEET performance in Merthyr Tydfil, services were reshaped by Youth Service teams and partner agencies, which has supported the progress of this group of learners. For example, by regularly reviewing the Inspire 2 Achieve project offer, around 90% of participants annually progress to a post 16 destination.
- 5.4 The number of young people categorised as 'red' has also increased significantly from 2017 as shown in Table 3. Reflecting the greater level of complexities young people are presenting to services.

Table 3

Year	No. 'Red' categorised	% Entering EET
<b>2017</b>	84	89.2% (75 yp)
<b>2018</b>	97	89.6% (87 yp)
<b>2019</b>	133	85% (113 yp)
<b>2020</b>	112	90% (101 yp)

- 5.5 Table 4 shows the education setting of the 22 NEET young people during Year 11 and shows that the majority attended mainstream education programmes, which is the reverse of 2019. By March 2020, only two of this group had entered EET. Two young people did not respond to offers of support and 15 were not ready to enter EET but were offered or continued to receive additional support to enable them to do so. The remainder were actively seeking employment and training.

Table 4

Education Setting Year 11	Number of Year 11 NEET Young People
Afon Taf High School	4
Bishop Hedley RC High School	0
Cyfarthfa High School	5
Greenfield School	1
Penydre High School	4
PRU	4
Special Tuition	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22</b>

## 6.0 POSITION STATEMENT 2021 SCHOOL LEAVERS

- 6.1 As a result of early identification and the work of the school NEET panels, there were 114 Year 11 young people supported and tracked over the academic year 2020-21. Following the re-opening of schools prior to the Easter break an additional 21 young people were categorised as being 'high risk NEET' as they had either not returned to school or had disengaged from learning, taking the total to 135.
- 6.2 Through support provided by Careers Wales and a lead worker, 123 out of the 135 have a transition plan with an intended destination when they complete year 11. A further three young people are undecided and the remainder are being followed up by schools, lead workers and Careers Wales.
- 6.3 Pandemic Response
- Alternative methods of partnership working have been developed and successfully implemented by the NEET's team, ensuring that tracking and monitoring of young people's progress continued.
  - For example, pre and post 16 NEET panel meetings continued online with partners including schools, Careers Wales, College Merthyr Tydfil, Youth Support, Inspire 2 Achieve, Inspire 2 Work, C4W and work based learning providers, all providing regular updates on all vulnerable young people. This work also fed into the Vulnerable Families Panel.
  - Front line support work with young people who were either NEET or at risk of becoming NEET continued via regular keeping in touch and the development and delivery of online interventions and resources.
  - Schools have supported the transition process by liaising with partners, in particular the College Merthyr Tydfil through support from transition activities and monitoring if applications. Regular contact with the NEET's team has also been maintained.
  - Careers Wales committed to reaching as many of the Year 11 population as possible this year in addition to the usual target groups and have continued to offer online advice and guidance sessions to young people when unable to undertake face to face work.
  - The College Merthyr Tydfil has continued to offer online transition activities and support throughout the pandemic and has worked closely with the NEET co-ordinator, Heads of Year 11 the PRU and Special Tuition to monitor young people's applications.

- The College Merthyr Tydfil has taken the decision to commence enrolment from the end of June 2021, which will enable the college to offer summer activities aimed at supporting their transition to the college. Additional Welsh Government funding will be utilised to support these activities.
- The local authority, led by the Economic Regeneration Department, has become a Gateway Representative for the recently launched UK wide 'Kickstart' employment programme and aims to create around 95 local job opportunities for eligible young people aged 16-24 years. Recruitment has already started.

## **7.0 NEET STRATEGY 2018-21, PROGRESS TO DATE**

7.1 A number of key developments have been progressed during year three of the current NEET strategy:

- A task and finish group was convened to consider the proposed changes to the Early Identification Toolkit (EIT). The agreed changes are currently being progressed with the aim of introducing the new format in the academic year 2021-22.
- To complement this work, a review of the NEET panel meeting format was undertaken with partners to ensure that they continue to meet the principles of early intervention and prevention.
- Following a review of Capita One arrangements, additional investment has been secured for the further development of the local authority's Capita One Team and work has recently progressed on adding new teams to Capita in order to develop reports and the improve the quality and use of data.
- A consultation has taken place with young people, staff and partners to determine the needs of young people, which will be used to inform the future strategic approach to NEET and youth service-related work and the development of the new Youth Support Services Plan.

7.2 The following key actions for the forthcoming year have been agreed by the NEET Steering group, but some are carried over from last year due to other work being prioritised during the pandemic.

- Develop the strategic approach for the new Youth Support Services Plan which will incorporate the NEETs agenda.
- Identify funding opportunities for the continuation of the NEET team and Inspire projects in light of the forthcoming Families First review and the uncertainty around funding beyond 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and what, if any, funding will follow ESF when it comes to an end in December 2022.
- Implement and monitor the revised EIT from the start of the new academic year in September 2021.
- Work with Social Services to improve information sharing on young people who are 'high risk' NEET was delayed last year but will now be progressed with discussions due to take place around the scope and methods of sharing relevant information.
- Review the training for lead workers to identify good practice and minimum standards.

- Establish the range of interventions being utilised by lead workers to address specific risk factors, including mental health, and analyse effectiveness and value for money to inform best/future practice.

## 8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 It has been identified that there are currently no financial implications associated with this report, but that the risk associated with the outcome of the Families First review and uncertainty around the loss of ESF funding should be noted.
- 8.2 It is recommended that Inspire and NEET related work be considered as a priority for any Local Authority future funding application from the UK wide Shared Prosperity Fund.

## 9.0 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1

	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Neutral/Not Applicable	
1. Merthyr Tydfil Well-being Objectives	1 of 4	0 of 4	3.of 4	
2. Sustainable Development Principles - How have you considered the five ways of working? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long term</li> <li>• Prevention</li> <li>• Integration</li> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Involvement</li> </ul>	5 of 5	0 of 5	0 of 5	
3. Protected Characteristics (including Welsh Language)	2 of 10	0 of 10	8 of 10	
4. Socio-economic Disadvantage	1 of 6	0 of 6	5 of 6	
5. Consultation and Engagement	Undertaken	Due to be Undertaken	Not Required	
	1 of 1	0 of 1	0 of 1	
6. Data and Evidence to inform the proposal	Yes		No	
	1 of 1		0 of 1	
7. Biodiversity and the resilience of Ecosystems	Maintained	Enhanced	Reduced	Neutral/Not Applicable
	0 of 1	0 of 1	0 of 1	1 of 1
<b>Summary</b>				
The main positive impacts are:	The main positive impacts are that young people aged 11 – 25 at risk of becoming NEET are identified and supported in order to			

	make a successful transition from school into a post 16 destination and are also able to access appropriate support if they become NEET at post 16.
<b>The main negative impacts are:</b>	European funding for NEET related support programmes at pre and post 16 are due to end in December 2022 and potential of withdrawal of Families First funding following the review, would have a negative impact on the early intervention and prevention of young people becoming NEET.

**SUE WALKER**  
**CHIEF OFFICER (LEARNING)**

**COUNCILLOR LISA MYTTON**  
**LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND**  
**CABINET MEMBER FOR LEARNING**

<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>		
<b>Title of Document(s)</b>	<b>Document(s) Date</b>	<b>Document Location</b>
<b>Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?</b>		

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