

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding)	Date of Meeting:	16 November 2021
Subject:	Report on the Council's NEET Reduction and Early Intervention Service commissioned through Economic Growth and Housing (Employment & Learning)		
Report of:	Head of Economic Growth and Housing	Wards Affected:	All Wards
Portfolio:	Regeneration and Skills		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To update Members on work relating to this Key Decision and advise on the progress of the Sefton Economic Strategy Action Plan (Dec 2019), the associated Covid-19 Recovery plan and plans to refresh and update the Sefton Economic Strategy Action Plan from April 2022.

Recommendation(s):

That Members note:

- (1) The report and the progress made by the NEET Reduction and Early Intervention Service.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To provide information to Members on the performance of this key contract delivered by Career Connect on behalf of Sefton Council.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

None

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

There are no direct revenue costs associated with the recommendations in this report.

Costs for the operation of this service fall within existing budgets within the Economic Growth and Housing (Employment & Learning) department.

(B) Capital Costs

There are no direct capital costs associated with the recommendations in this report.

Implications of the Proposals:

<p>Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): All resources required for the operation of this service including adequate staffing levels of professionally qualified staff are operated by the Council's commissioned provider, Career Connect.</p>								
<p>Legal Implications: None arising from this report</p>								
<p>Equality Implications: There are no equality implications. The equality implications of this Service are positive. The service improves the lives of young people from across Sefton through effective and personalised progression planning which take individual needs and aspirations into account. Specific focus on vulnerable groups enhances the ability of disadvantaged young people to reach their full potential and make a successful transition to adulthood.</p>								
<p>Climate Emergency Implications:</p> <p>The recommendations within this report will</p> <table border="1"><tr><td>Have a positive impact</td><td>No</td></tr><tr><td>Have a neutral impact</td><td>Yes</td></tr><tr><td>Have a negative impact</td><td>No</td></tr><tr><td>The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors</td><td>Yes</td></tr></table>	Have a positive impact	No	Have a neutral impact	Yes	Have a negative impact	No	The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Yes
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The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Yes							

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

<p>Protect the most vulnerable: This service brings added value to the Council through its sustained focus on their wellbeing and attainment of various vulnerable groups including young people known to the justice system, looked after children and care leavers, young people with SEND, teenage parents and others.</p>
<p>Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Employment is a key indicator in improving resilience within our communities, as young people will be more able to make a positive and confident contribution if they can plan and achieve their goals.</p>
<p>Commission, broker and provide core services: This commission delivers the statutory duties related to the tracking and destinations of all young people aged 16 and 17 in the borough of Sefton and supplies regular reports to the government on rates of NEET required by all Local Authorities. The service also</p>

supplies the key requirements for the Council related to the Raised Participation age.
Place – leadership and influencer: This commission plays a key role in the wider local offer for young people in Sefton and works in synergy with education and the Post-16 training and employment system to provide pathways for their progression
Drivers of change and reform: The Council has chosen to extend and add value to its statutory duties for young people aged 16 and 17 by extending tracking through this service for 18-year olds and introducing innovative early intervention approaches to identify younger people from year 9 upwards most at risk of becoming NEET at age 16.
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: This service operates within the portfolio of employment and skills support programmes offered by the Council through the Employment & Learning team in Economic Growth and Housing, alongside regeneration, planning and business support. These links amplify connectivity with employers offering apprenticeships, traineeships, jobs and vocational training and contribute to the economic prosperity of Sefton.
Greater income for social investment: All routes for employment, work experience and vocational progression are promoted to young people and wherever possible the options to undertake these activities with organisations and employers with a social investment agenda are maximised.
Cleaner Greener The service provider, Career Connect, has provided an environmental sustainability plan as part of the procurement process and refreshes this regularly. This includes promotion of public transport, awareness of the Council's policies on carbon emissions, single use plastics etc.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD 6606/21) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.4807/21) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

N/A

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Committee meeting.

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Appendices:

There are no appendices to this report

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

The Education and Skills Act 2008 legislated to raise the age of compulsory participation in education or training to 18 by 2015 and until the end of the year in which young people turn 17 in 2013 – this is known as Raising the Participation Age (RPA). Local Authorities are responsible for ensuring that young people in their area participate in learning and to ensure there is support for young people to overcome personal barriers to engagement. Local Authority RPA plans are inspected by OFSTED, as part of reviewing arrangements for their support of school improvements.

The Act placed the following two duties on local authorities with regard to 16 -18-year olds, known as the **September Guarantee** and **Tracking duties** which are described as follows:

- To promote the effective participation in education and training of 16-17-year olds in their areas with a view to ensuring that these young people fulfil the duty to participate in education or training
- Make arrangements to identify 16-17-year olds who are not participating in education or training ensuring that robust tracking arrangements are in place to identify young people who are not engaged in education or training or who have left provision enables local authorities to offer support as soon as possible.

The September Guarantee is a guarantee of an offer, made by the end of September, of an appropriate place in post 16 education or training for every young person completing compulsory education. Ensuring that every young person has an offer of a place to progress onto is particularly important as it helps young people make a seamless transition into post 16 learning or employment with training.

The Council, like all local authorities must consider how best to meet its duties for young people Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) within a dynamic legislative framework whilst also considering ongoing budgetary constraints.

The transition from school into work is a vital stage in the lives of our young people. A successful transition through a high quality, valued pathway can be the start to a

promising career. Becoming trapped in poor quality, low paying alternatives can trigger many downstream costs and contribute to a loss of personal, social and economic capital, (which can be measured through increase in the number of those who are NEET).

We know that young people who do not make successful transitions at 16, 17 or 18 years of age may well require the support of a range of partners and agencies in later life to help them get back on track or to a positive outcome. Furthermore, young people who spend periods NEET at this key time in their lives are less likely to feel empowered to have ambitious goals and aspirations for their future, leading to a loss to themselves in terms of their individual potential unfulfilled but also a loss to their communities and the wider economy benefitting from their talents.

2. The NEET Reduction and Early Intervention Service

The NEET Reduction and Early Intervention Service (NR&EIS) was commissioned by Economic Growth & Housing in December 2018 under the leadership of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Skills and aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Reduce the levels of young people NEET year on year over a 3 – 4-year period and cover all the relevant statutory duties for the Council as listed above
- Track the destinations of all young people so as to reduce the number of Not Known young people
- Introduce an Early intervention model for those young people most at risk of becoming NEET and monitor the impact of this model on NEET levels
- Continue the destination tracking of academic age 18 young people no longer covered by the statutory duty to Local authorities from 2018
- Provide a focused support service for a designated range of vulnerable groups who have high levels of NEET with a primary focus on disengaged young people below the age of 19 and relevant adults up to 25 who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHP) and care leavers who are NEET.
- Augment the provision of high-quality careers guidance provided by schools in line with the Gatsby standards for those young people who are NEET
- Work in partnership with Sefton@work and other local agencies such as the FE Colleges and training providers and schools to design interventions to reduce NEET and promote sustainable employment

Following a procurement exercise Career Connect were appointed to deliver the Service and operations commenced in June 2018 for a period of three years, with an option for the Council to extend for a further year on the basis of effective performance.

The key elements of the contract include:

- Supporting the Local Authority Statutory Duty to ensure young people who are NEET aged 16-19 years old (and those up to 25 with an EHP in place and Care Leavers who are NEET) receive relevant information, advice and guidance in order to be supported to a successful transition into post 16 education, employment and/or training. This includes young people who attend out-of-

borough Alternative Provision settings or young people who have been excluded from mainstream school and are vulnerable to becoming NEET.

- Identify young people in the Spring term of Year 11 and Year 12 who have no intended destination or whose intended destination is doubtful and deploying skilled advisors to support them into an offer of an appropriate place, to meet the Council's responsibilities under the Raising Participation Agenda and DfE reporting.
- A targeted IAG service to promote EET to vulnerable groups through intensive working in partnership with specialist services to support identified vulnerable groups. This includes an engagement service to target those in the NEET cohort and those whose situation is currently Not Known (NK), in order to achieve full participation in education, employment or training (EET) through to age 18 and ensure individuals are supported to remain EET thereafter.
- An early intervention response for young people in years 9, 10 and 11 who are deemed most at risk of becoming NEET and disengaging from provision by the age of 16 and 17.

The innovative model of Early Intervention and Prevention within the commission is primarily targeted at young people from vulnerable groups and those from disadvantaged backgrounds who require additional support to access learning and employment opportunities with a particular focus on promoting retention and preventing disengagement in years 9, 10 and 11. Close liaison and communication with schools is key and the underlying relationships of trust with Career Connect have proven essential. This new element was introduced as the Council recognised that there are a variety of potentially complex reasons for why these young people find the transition from school to be challenging. For example, they may have a lack of awareness or understanding of the potential opportunities available to them, the absence of a role model or low self-esteem. However, with early intervention we can work with these young people to provide support and identify ways of addressing any challenges or barriers they have, which will support the Council to continue to reduce the number of young people becoming NEET.

The service carries out an Annual Destinations Survey where the destination of all young people aged 16-18 is confirmed. The purpose of the Destinations Survey is primarily linked to the September Guarantee in terms of ensuring Year 11/12's continue on in education, training, or other positive destinations. Those young people that are identified as not moving into a positive destination are offered appropriate support and alternative opportunities. Those who have not made a successful transition after the survey will form part of the NEET group and therefore are targeted by Career Connect specialist advisers and coaches. The LA must also report monthly on young people's destinations.

Whilst NEET terminology commonly conjures up images of the long-term unemployed known as the "Core NEET groups", it also covers those who drift in and out employment and/or education and/or training (NEET 'churn'), and to those who take 'time out' after completing compulsory education (transition/gap NEET). There are also several significant equality issues to be considered related to disability, gender, orientation and

other characteristics which mean that a personalised approach to meet the needs of all young people is required.

The continued tracking of 18 year olds as an additional local measure has given the Council a much better understanding of where these young people are in relation to positive destinations and identify those who need additional support to enable earlier engagement, working towards an onward pathway of support into the adult world of work through referrals into our in-house job brokerage service, Sefton@Work.

We believe that by strengthening a more preventative approach at an earlier age will reduce the number of young people being disengaged from aged 16 onwards and this commission expects to demonstrate the effects of this shift over time with increased preventative actions feeding through into reductions in the overall NEET population over the course of this commission and beyond.

The Key Outcomes we expect to achieve through this commission are:

- An overall reduction in the NEET rate for Sefton, improving throughout the contract period
- A reduction in the Number of Young People whose destination is Not Known
- A reduction in the Number of days Young People spend NEET
- An increase in the Number of Young People who are EET
- A reduction in the levels of NEET within the following vulnerable groups:
 - SEND young people up to the age of 25 who have an EHCP in place
 - Looked after Children and Care Leavers
 - Young people known to YOS Services
 - Young people who are part of Sefton’s Turnaround Families
 - Young Carers

Achieving these targeted outcomes will help Sefton Council to improve its performance in relation to the reduction of NEET in comparison with the LCR, statistical neighbours and at a national level. This commission sets out to improve this ranking year on year, through the lifetime of the project wherever possible.

As part of this service and additional to supporting NEET and Vulnerable Young People the following activities take place on an annual basis. The timeline for the operational year July 2021/2022 is as follows:

Date	Activity
July/August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • September Guarantee Contact with schools/providers and colleges continuing to update offer of learning • Support those young people with no offer or at risk of NEET • Work with identified Year 11 RONI and Vulnerable Groups
End August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Education and Learning Destinations Expire and require follow up for all and review for all 16/17/18 years (SEND up to 25yrs)
Sept/Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm destinations of full cohort approx. 8500 young people • Activity Survey all Year 11’s educated in Sefton report on 31st October. • Starters lists received, input starts and update September Guarantee status

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaising with schools regarding Statutory Duty and performance of post 16 • Request UCAS lists for Year 14 • End of September – report on September Guarantee Offers Met. • Review of SEND eligibility – plan reviews for the academic year • Review Looked After Cohort and transition to Leaving Care Cohort • All year groups move • October is a known leaving points for early ‘dropouts’ target support for early intervention.
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RONI Focus: Cohort Check and for Year 11 risk of NEET identification • Review of all vulnerable group cohorts
Mid-January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid Jan - Start Year 11 and 12 Cohort Checks • End Jan -School re-confirm cohort and registration status of each student, including details of any students now not on roll and where they have moved onto (new school, out of area into another LA). • Update any characteristically and risk of NEET information. • Report on Activity Survey and individual school data produced
February Half Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition support for Year 11/Vulnerable groups on going but targeted resource reviewed to maximise impact.
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus: September Guarantee send previous cohort check (Jan) returned to school and request offer information for each Year 11.
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send supporting reminder requests for final checks from any outstanding schools • End of April - Send previous cohort checks (from Jan) returned to school and request a final ‘sign off’ of the cohort
Early May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Cohort Check
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of vulnerable groups • Start of September Guarantee Process

3. How are we Doing? A snapshot of Current Performance on NEET

As part of the NR&EIS, a suite of agreements has been put in place to enable us to bring forward the completion of the September Guarantee destinations. This gives us increased assurance that the data we have on destinations for those leaving school is extremely robust. On 30th September 2021, our data confirms that we have now achieved our best ever performance for the September Guarantee for year 11 at **98.7%** and for year 12 at 95%. This is due to the excellent relationships we have with Sefton Schools, FE Colleges, 6th Form Providers and Training Providers where they share information regarding learning offers made to young people for September. Through these links, we can work with the relevant institutions to ensure early identification of young people who fail to start their offered place to identify alternative provision as soon as possible.

Through the delivery of our NR&EIS, we have adapted our delivery methods to meet the needs of young people we are working with and have remained focused on key contract performance indicators. Through robust planning we have identified a range of solutions to address barriers and advocate for young people which has been key to this. During

this past year, the Council has benefitted from insight on trends in terms of young people's motivation during college/school closures

The provision of independent Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) is an integral part of the broader education, skills, and employment system. Timely, relevant, and good quality IAG reduces the possibility of mismatches between supply and demand, generates feedback on performance of the system and maximises young people's potential. We aim to ensure that all young people have access to good quality careers guidance, through their school and through our targeted service where this is necessary.

3.1 NEET and Not Known (NK) across our wider 16-18 group

- Our latest data confirms that Sefton has achieved its best ever performance for October 2021, at **3.36%** for NEET/NK for all 16-17-year olds. In October 2020 Sefton ranked 4th out of the 151 Local Authority Areas this year's national comparisons will be published end of November.
- Compared to 2020 Sefton had improved NEET/NK 16-17-year olds by 15 young people and 0.31%
- NEET has decreased for all ages 16-18-year olds, the biggest improvement is with 18year old with a NEET reduction of 52 young people – evidence the service offer is seeing year on year improvements.
- Although participation is slightly down by 0.03% on last year, the cohort is actually an additional 58 young people.
- We have seen an improvement on those young people in (EET) and an increase compared to October 2020 with an additional 73 more young people entering EET destinations
- Career Connect have tracked over 8000 young people in September and October working alongside schools, colleges, and training providers.
- Year on year performance improvement with an annual reduction since 2016/17 from 8% to 4.2% a reduction of 3.8% with NEET/NK and consistently better than North West and England averages
- The current rate and frequency of engagement with clients for tracking Not Known (NK), vulnerable groups and case loaded young people is excellent in Sefton at 0.5% it is the 2nd lowest in LCR, lower than both the Regional and National averages and also the lowest in comparison to our Statistical Neighbours.
- Sefton has the lowest % for NEET and Combined across all our Local Authority areas,
- Sefton is performing better that the North West NEET & Not Known combined measure
- Sefton is performing better that the England NEET & Not Known combined measure

- Sefton is ranked on average month on month second out of its statistical neighbours

3.2 NEET & EET Data for our Vulnerable Groups

The following table gives an outline of the current performance for young people within the vulnerable groups targeted by this service.

	Special Education Need or Disability	Care Leavers	Young Carer	Alternative Provision	Young Parents	Pregnancy /Teen Mums	Known to Youth Offending Service	Elective Home Education - statutory school
Oct-21	SEND	CL	YC	AP	YP	P	YOS	EHE
Academic Age	16-24	16-18	16-17	16-17	16-18	16-18	16-17	16-17
Cohort size	650	34	58	70	31	41	26	47
EET	522	23	52	50	9	13	19	37
NEET	64	11	6	17	21	26	7	7
Other not RPA (eg jobs without training)	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not Known	62	0	0	3	1	2	0	3
NEET & Not Known %	19.4%	32.4%	10.3%	28.6%	71.0%	68.3%	26.9%	21.3%
NEET %	9.8%	32.4%	10.3%	24.3%	67.7%	63.4%	26.9%	14.9%
Not Known %	9.5%	0.0%	0.0%	4.3%	3.2%	4.9%	0.0%	6.4%

3. NEET Reduction & Early Intervention Service Supporting Council Departments

Career Connect, our service provider, are committed to working in partnership with the Council responding to local needs and developing opportunities for EET that meet the requirements of young people. We recognise that young people do not fall into convenient categories where complex needs and barriers to progress can be met by a single off the shelf offer. We have therefore ensured that the service does not stand alone, it is an integrated collaborative approach working with a range of other Council departments to support their own statutory duties and a range of Careers Advisors and Coaches are allocated to Council teams which has yielded the excellent results we are not seeing in relation to our current NEET figures.

Priority Group	Area of Support
Leaving Care and LAC Cohorts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link with Virtual School for pre-16s young people educated or living in Sefton • Support the Personal Education Plans and Career Action Plans • Post transition support for clients on Sefton MBC Employability Pathways and other destinations, focused on threats to retention • Co-ordinate EET progression support for out-of-borough clients including face to face interventions, case conferencing and advocacy

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EET participation data shared with Virtual School to target support • Quarterly Report will be produced and presented at Corporate Parenting Report. • Monthly collaborative production of accurate IYSS report on accommodation (populated by Social Care), education, employment, and training status of Looked After from 16/18 up to 25 • working closely with looked after children and those leaving care 16-18 year olds and up to the age of 25 with EHC plan living in Sefton to improve their resilience in finding education, employment, and training. This is underpinned by strong partnership working with local social work teams, housing options, employers, Sefton@work, Sefton’s Adult and Community Learning, DWP and employers to ensure young people have the support needed to progress • Member of the new Next Steps – Panel • Membership of NEET/EET Group and Employability Group to look at specific needs and opportunities
YOT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre 16 support for at risk of NEET • Clients supported into provision/employment meeting the requirements of their Order. The adviser will contribute to pre-sentence, panel reports and final reviews ensuring that movement into EET is given high profile. • IAG and career planning to manage the transition from custody to post custody licence, including support to clients and their parents/carers whilst on police bail • Effective engagement with young people who have multiple barriers to access services • EET destinations shared with YOT team • YOT Board Member and Operational Group
SEND 14-25 Years (With EHCP or High Needs agreed with SENSIS Team)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bespoke support provided from yr9 (or 3 years from transition) with specialist advisers linking into schools and SEN LA team. Provision dovetails with existing school CEIAG arrangements and wider partner support for client (e.g. YOS, Social Care Team). It will be informed by information/views of partners, parents, and the client – with aspirations, supported, challenged, and developed to ensure individual potential is realised • Support to clients at their annual SEN review including career planning to inform the EHCP ‘preparation for adult life’ • Clients encouraged/supported to access the SEN Local Offer/specialist provision to ensure progress to stated outcome(s) • Support tailored to individual needs e.g. adapted resources for dyslexia • Brokerage and linked advocacy to opportunities and appropriate referrals (e.g. Job Centre Plus) • supporting SEND young people with an EHCP and or High Need Funding: • (From Year 9 to Year 14) – there is a team of SEND advisers working closely with schools/colleges and the L.A. statutory assessment team to support work the council undertake in relation to

	<p>young people with an EHCP or HNF and their transitions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (From Year 14 to age 25) – there is a specialist advisor, undertaking a complex role that requires strong partnership working with SEN, Adult Social Services and Mental health services. • Service Lead is Deputy Chair of Preparation for Adulthood Group and also a member of the SEN Forum
Alternative Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact – coach support looking at Year 10 and 11 • Pinefield – IAG support focusing on Year 10 and 11 – looking at resilience and support with mental health. Liaise with EHE.
Elected Home Educated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with year 9, 10 and 11 to ensure a positive transition at year 11. • To be an active member of Monitoring and Placement Group coordinated by Schools Regulatory Service, working in collaboration to ensure that robust systems and procedures are in place across agencies to identify, support, track, and monitor those children not receiving education, ensuring and supporting a speedy re-entry to the education system and taking a lead agency role as appropriate. • Liaise with Pinefield to do home visits to those pupils who receive complimentary education. These pupils are often educated in the home and do not attend the Pinefield centre. • Assessment and IAG with all young people who engage. • Education and Learning referrals to providers and other agencies. • Intensive Transition support
Teenage Mothers/ Pregnancy 14-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support delivered jointly with Health and Well Being Centres, Parenting2000 and a network of Health professionals, including joint home visits and IAG sessions • Active promotion of Care to Learn, support with health issues, finance, and housing to support integration into learning • Brokerage with providers/family etc to ensure childcare arrangements in place for EET destinations
Young Carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of pre/post 16 and core offer provided • Link with Young Carers Project to increase EET outcomes, engagement, and sustainment.
Early Help and Supporting Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop successful transitions for pre and post 16 young people who are at risk of becoming, and remaining NEET. Young people will be identified through referrals to and from the Supporting Families Programme. • Referral form identification for Early Help • Complete evidence of all interventions using agreed documentation for each EET outcome • Track all identified young people and report progressions into education, employment and training contributing to the outcome-based funding claims. • Ensure young people identified through Sefton Supporting Families have agreed Transition/Action Plans in place post 16 • Active member of Early Help Board
Year 11 'Risk of NEET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with school and other agencies to determine those 'at Risk of NEET' and establish at RONI register for each school leaving cohort. • The Year 11 identification with schools will start earlier in November.

Indicator' RONI	<p>Those identified will be case loaded to a coach and support will be provided in partnership with schools and other agencies to ensure that those identified progress to EET.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lead on and support the September guarantee for the current leaver group. We will deliver the guarantee processes, focussing on the tracking of and engagement with the cohort to ensure the identification of young people leaving compulsory education who would benefit from engaging with this service.
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In addition, the data collected through our NR&EIS also supports and informs the Council, using “best in class” tracking system provides reliable and up to date evidence on destinations for our most vulnerable groups to connected teams and structures across the Council including the SEND team, the Virtual School, the YOT Management Board, Corporate Parenting Board, High Needs Panel, Placing and the Children’s and Young People’s Partnership Board.

4. Post 16 Pathways Partnership

In 2020, the Council established a strategic Post 16 Pathways Partnership which brings together agencies and services to support the reduction of young people who are NEET by developing clear pathways for all pupils post 16. By strengthening our partnership arrangements, the aim is to improve transition, retention, and achievement of our young people. Actions completed to date through the Partnership include a survey of secondary schools’ barriers and strengths in offering employment and industry placements for compliance with the Gatsby Careers guidance standards and setting up a new Caseload Conferencing model to support specific groups of NEET young people who are ready for work or learning but cannot access appropriate opportunities. The work of the Post 16 Pathways Partnership brings together a range of these agencies to support young people to improve EET outcomes and will help the council to deliver even further reductions in NEET number.

We have extensive and up to date local knowledge of learning/training provision and the local labour market as part of the annual activity survey for the September Guarantee there is a commitment from FE colleges, 6th Forms, schools, and providers in Sefton to share information with us regarding the learning offers made to young people for September. The partnership ensures early identification of young people who fail to start their offered place to identify alternative provision as soon as possible. Additionally, young people already identified as at risk of becoming NEET and the vulnerable group cohorts receive enhanced transition support.

5. Managing the impact of COVID

We believe that a preventative approach in terms of NEET and NK rates has mitigated the impact of Covid 19 and a series of lockdowns during the past 18 months and therefore reduced the negative impact we may otherwise have felt. This is borne out through comparisons with other areas and statistical neighbours throughout this period. We recognise there remain some very real challenges ahead to improving outcomes particularly for our most vulnerable client groups in the borough, and we will continue to utilise our strong working relationships with education institutions and training providers

in Sefton and the wider City region and beyond to track and record destinations and activities of our young people.

In Sefton Career Connect have adapted their delivery to meet the needs of those young people they are working with and have remained focused on key contract performance indicators.

Through robust planning they have identified a range of solutions to address any barriers and advocating for young people has been key to this. During the first 12 months of Covid-19, they have reported trends in terms of young people's motivation during college/school closures and believe that this has resulted in more young people more likely to disengage from their education, learning or training and that those who were already facing disadvantage have been hit the hardest.

To address this, they have targeted young people categorised in vulnerable groups such as Looked After Children, those young people involved in Youth Justice System, young people with Education Health Care (EHC) plans, Young Carers, Teen Mums, Elected Home Educated and those young people involved with Early Help. Supporting effective early intervention for young people at risk of poorer outcomes, ensuring retention and reducing risk of NEET. For those young people in NEET we are building trusting relationships and working in collaboration to reduce length of time NEET.

As part of the Sefton's response to COVID-19 and the impact it was having on our young people, Career Connect also actively followed up young people early in EET destinations especially those in Apprenticeships to provide earlier interventions including high quality IAG and access to our service at the most appropriate time. In total, 953 young people were tracked between April – June 2020 and Jan – March 21. They assessed support needs and those at risk of unemployment and targeted particular sectors to review and support – for example those likely to be furloughed – hospitality sector, retail, beauty/hairdressing. They advocated on behalf of our young people with employers and training providers to look at ways to deliver a more blended offer. They offered additional support to those young people who dropped out of their apprenticeships during the pandemic (89) offering additional IAG support to move them back into EET.