

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills)	Date of Meeting:	3 July 2018
	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding)		10 July 2018
Subject:	NEET		
Report of:	Executive Director	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Regeneration & Skills		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No.
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To satisfy the request from Overview & Scrutiny Committee for progress reports against each recommendation of the NEET Working Group Final Report in 2013

Recommendation(s):

That Members:

1. Note the progress achieved against the agreed objectives in the current reporting period.
2. Agree that future reporting on this issue forms part of the reporting framework to be devised once the Council adopts the forthcoming Sefton Economic Strategy, as this will supercede and update the recommendations of the NEET Working Group dating back to 2013

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

As this is an update report on activities, no alternative options have been considered.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

There are no cost implications to this report. It provides Members with an update on existing activities.

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):

Legal Implications:

Equality Implications:

There are no equality implications.

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable:

This report focuses wholly on services targeting the most vulnerable young people in Sefton.

Facilitate confident and resilient communities:

The participation of young people in education and employment prevents further social and economic disenfranchisement and promotes resilience.

Commission, broker and provide core services:

The prevention of young people being NEET is covered by a range of statutory duties placed upon the Council

Place – leadership and influencer:

The Council acts in a key leadership role in the provision of services to NEET young people.

Drivers of change and reform:

The Council is driving forward aggressive and innovative approaches to the future procurement and deliver of IAG services for NEET young people with local partners.

Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:

The engagement of young people in skills development has a fundamental bearing on their future economic prosperity and their ability to achieve their personal and earnings potential .

Greater income for social investment:

The Council is leading on the development of a number of methods to lever in additional income for NEET services through social investment bonds.

Cleaner Greener

Economic engagement of young people is widely recognised as having an impact on the overall appreciation of place, respect for neighbourhoods and community cohesion.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Head of Corporate Resources (FD5070/18) and Head of Regulation and Compliance (LD.4354/18) 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 / Council 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 Not in Employment Education or Training (NEETs) Working Group was jointly established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Environmental Services) and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services) to undertake a review of issues surrounding the delivery of the NEETS service within the Borough. The Final Report of the Working Group was received by Cabinet on 28th March 2013.
- Members requested an annual progress report to the relevant Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Since the Senior Management Review in 2015, responsibility for NEETs, and youth transitions to work generally, have been redistributed from Head of Schools & Families to the Head of Investment & Employment. Therefore this progress report is addressed to the two relevant Overview & Scrutiny Committees as has been requested.
- Schools continue to be under a statutory duty to provide a universal Careers Education and Information Advice & Guidance (CEIAG) service to all students. It has to be both impartial and independent i.e. not wholly delivered by school staff, though a teacher may co-ordinate activities.
- Sefton Council commissions a full service contract to track the NEET cohort and those at risk of NEET, through an annual Activity Survey and a continuous monitoring system that embraces all sources and destinations for 16-18 year olds (18-25 year old for those with Special Educational Needs)
- Sefton Council also commissions an Information Advice and Guidance service for NEETs, with a view to maximising their participation and reducing the NEET rate.

This necessarily involves close working relationships with Youth Offending Team, Leaving Care teams, health services, Sefton Turnaround etc and external partners.

- The Raising the Participation Age (RPA) legislation has been completely implemented, and since 2015, all 16-18 year olds must be in education, training or in employment with training.
- The academization of schools has moved the fulcrum of relations between the schools and the Council from legal oversight and educational improvement to provision of back-office services and pathway planning.
- The government has imposed a funding obligation on training providers that learners with a grade D in Maths and English must continue to study these subjects in their post-GCSE programme, in effect generating an extra volume of resits and drop-outs in FE. This has a significant impact on the learning experience of young people.
- For independent training providers, the impact of the Maths/English requirement on achievement rates has come on top of difficult trading conditions, leading to poor Ofsted scores, cash flow issues, and in several cases, closure and loss of provision for 16-18 year olds in Sefton.
- The Council is a founding partner of the Sefton Education Business Partnership that exists to develop school/industry links and to prepare young people for the world of work by engaging employers and motivating students.
- Sefton Council's commitment to this agenda is clear and is at the highest level of the Council. Cllr Maher, Leader of the Council has undertaken the portfolio of Employment & Skills for the Combined Authority and has taken a specific responsibility as the chair person for the Area Based Review of Post 16 Skills Provision. Cllr Atkinson, Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Skills also sits on the LCR Employment & Skills Board as Sefton's representative.

3. The evolving Context for NEET Support

3.1 LCR Careers Hub

Schools, colleges and training providers all have a statutory responsibility for delivering independent careers information, advice and guidance (IAG) to all their learners. Ofsted ensures this duty is delivered effectively and supports the best interests of the learner in their next steps. In addition, the Careers and Enterprise Company, the National Careers Service and the DWP all fund national careers support programmes, delivered by local partners, supporting schools in delivering their careers IAG and enterprise duties. There is also a range of commercial providers in the market able to supply independent careers advice and guidance support on direct contracts to schools and colleges.

However, feedback from stakeholders involved in the LCR Area Based Review of 16+ skills Provision undertaken in 2016/17 indicated a failure in the market in terms of the perceived impartiality of careers advice and guidance being provided and the quality and

local relevance of materials being used. It has therefore been agreed that The Combined Authority will establish a sub-regional careers hub to bring cohesion and better alignment with growth opportunities to the provision of careers information.

3.4 LCR Apprenticeship Hub

Sefton has expressed its full commitment as part of the LCR Combined Authority to the expansion of Apprenticeships. As a large scale employer in Merseyside, it also leads by example by creating a wide range of apprenticeship places across its departments spanning a number of occupational areas.

Apprenticeships form a key component of the LCR Devolution Deal with government and external funding has been made available to support the creation of the LCR Apprenticeships Hub. The Hub provides a range of promotional events in each LA area, hosts a number of high profile Skills Shows and undertakes ongoing engagement with employers to promote the benefits of creating apprenticeships within the workforce together with a web based resource for young people , training providers, employers and advisers. Further details on the Hub can be found here:

<http://apprenticeshipswork.org.uk/apprentices/>

3.5 LCR Apprenticeship Growth Plan

In January 2018, the LCR Employment & Skills Board agreed the LCR Apprenticeship Growth Plan. This Plan has been widely consulted upon and expresses a desire for the City region to deliver a step change in both the quality and quantity of Apprenticeship opportunities with an objective to create 20,000 Apprenticeship starts by 2020.

The Plan identifies the key challenges that without collective and collaborative action could inhibit programme delivery and future growth. These include:

- The impact of apprenticeship reforms;
- Apprenticeship awareness and understanding amongst employers;
- Falling 16-18 apprenticeship participation and local demographic impact;
- An imbalance between employer demand and the availability of provision;
- The issue of low attainment of English and maths at age 16 compared to national averages in some areas;
- The technical skills gap that exists across Liverpool City Region; and
- The complexity and fragmentation of the local skills system.

3.6 National Careers Strategy

Updated guidance was published by DfE following the unveiling of the government's long-overdue national careers strategy in December 2017, which requires schools and colleges to meet eight "Gatsby Benchmarks".

It states that providers are expected to work towards these standards, which have been designed over the past three years to ensure they succeed in a post-16 setting, as early as possible and meet them by the end of 2020. Colleges risk losing their grant funding if the demands are not met in that timescale but this constraint does not at this time appear to apply to schools.

The careers strategy also includes £4 million to support every school and college to have a careers leader, and a further £5 million funding to develop 20 careers hubs.

One of the Gatsby benchmarks is called “encounters with employers and employees”. The DfE expects every school or college to begin to offer every learner at least two “meaningful encounters” with an employer each year and this could, for example, involve students attending careers events, participating in CV workshops and mock interviews, mentoring, employer-delivered employability workshops, or business games and enterprise competitions.

From September 2018, every school or college should also appoint a named person to the role of “careers leader” to lead the in-house programme which should be published. An online self-evaluation tool, Compass, will be available in September 2018 for colleges to “assess” how their careers support compares against the Gatsby Benchmarks and the national average.

The eight benchmarks are:

1. A stable careers programme
2. Learning from career and labour market information
3. Addressing the needs of each student
4. Linking curriculum learning to careers
5. Encounters with employers and employees
6. Experiences of workplaces
7. Encounters with further and higher education
8. Personal guidance

3.7 Provision for SEND

Since the Children and Families Act 2014 came into force local authorities and their partner commissioning bodies have had a range of new responsibilities to develop joint arrangements to secure effective provision for children and young people with SEND. The provision of information, advice and support for children, their parents and young people is a specific responsibility that is additional to other information responsibilities and arrangements, such as the Local Offer. The primary purpose of such joint arrangements is to improve outcomes for 0 to 25-year-old children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities, including those with Education Health and Care (EHC) plans. Sefton has recently developed a number of service options to provide placements with sympathetic employers and providers to enable SEND young people opportunities to experience local workplaces. This has included the procurement of a specialist provider to assist in the co-ordination of these placements.

3.8 Youth Employment Initiative through Sefton@work

- The target group for Youth Employment Initiative has been young people aged between 16 and 29 years and NEET. YEI encapsulates a wider age cohort than other NEET interventions as it has included Universal Credit claimants under Live service and Full Service, young people claiming Income Support (largely the Leaving care group), young people affected by ill health claiming Employment Support Allowance and those who are non-claimants. As the funding is from the EU, the overriding eligibility criteria has related to residency and rights to take up work in the EU.

- The six city region local authorities have formed a consortium under the LCR Combined Authority to bid for and deliver a large-scale enhancement to the Youth Employment Gateway, called **Ways to Work** delivered by **Sefton@work**. This project has offered a local, intelligence-driven, comprehensive and integrated programme for young people and adults, designed to improve personal resilience and progress to sustainable employment.
- A key Feature of the Ways to Work Project , in addition to the individual support supplied through casework advisers, has been the provision of a significant number of paid work placements (or ILMs), enabling clients to access support in the workplace to help overcome barriers to sustainability. Local employers are invited to take part in this initiative by offering opportunities at least at the national minimum wage rate over and the placements need be in addition to their existing workforce to draw down funding to contribute towards wage costs. These ILM placements enable those with little or no work experience to understand better the world of work and develop relationship with an employer. In-work support is available through Sefton@work to help sustain clients in work for the duration of the placement opportunity and to locate progression employment after the completion of the supported placement.
- To date, more than 100 ILM opportunities have been created with local Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) deemed in a growth sector, or through other organisations where the job has a clear community benefit. These employment opportunities are across a range of sectors and have provided participants with a high quality experience where the rate of retention after the funding period completes has been in excess of 70%. The breadth of the ILM offer has been worked up by Sefton@work to appeal to many different groups of clients and spark the interest and motivation of disadvantaged groups to become re-engaged in the world of work:

This programme works in synergy with other Council services and initiatives, such as Sefton Turnaround and the Leaving Care teams. Specific opportunities with employers, including paid work placements, will be ring-fenced to clients also accessing support in these areas, thus adding value to the existing service offers to these clients

4 Local Impacts

- Taking these structural, organisational and curricular changes into account, the patterns of provision and progression are certainly challenging for today's young people. Some of these impacts are captured in the headline performance measures on NEET reported to government and accessible through the Council's data Portal for NEETs:
- The last activity survey (for year 11 leavers) undertaken showed that 96.3% of the total cohort were meeting the duty to participate. This includes attendance at school sixth form, Sixth Form College, Further Education, Higher Education, Other Post 16 Education, independent specialist providers or custodial institutions. It also incorporates those in full time training including Traineeships, EFA delivered work based learning, supported internships, study programmes etc, as well as those in Apprenticeships or full time education with accredited training.

- An additional 1.3% of this cohort were working towards participation such as re-engaging in activities, and those with a start date agreed. 0.2% of the cohort were taking a temporary break from learning, such as those with caring responsibilities, pregnancy, teenage parents or illness.
- This leaves just 2.2% of this cohort not meeting the duty to participate but does include those that may be in employment (but without learning) or undertaking voluntary work. There are a variety of reasons why a young person is not participating, and these can often be temporary in nature. It is important for this reason to undertake detailed tracking of these individuals, to provide specific assistance through our IAG contract to supporting individuals into EET.
- As at December 2017, for 16 and 17 year olds (the 18 year old rate no longer requiring to be reported nationally), Sefton's NEET rate was 3.5%. This ranks Sefton 30/152 nationally (1 being the worst and 152 the best). Sefton's Not Known rate is considerably better and sits at 1.3% ranking us 120/152. The combined NEET and Not Known rate is 4.8% which ranks Sefton 107/152. This clearly indicates that the systems that we have in place for data tracking are effective.
- In terms of Liverpool City Region, Sefton are ranked 5/6 (1 being worst and 6 the best) for the combined NEET and Not Known figures.
- Other impacts relate to learners' experiences of the local educational and skills system. Where providers have withdrawn from the market due to commercial concerns or inadequate quality, students in PRUs or Impact find alternative provision less attractive or accessible. Conversely, colleges regard this cohort as not ready to progress, and the drop-out rate has increased for those who do make the transition.
- The English/Maths requirement deters progression from schools to FE, generates high levels of re-sits, which do not improve grades, and lead to higher drop-out rates and learner frustration. In addition, lower achievement rates in English & Maths damage the formula funding on which Colleges rely and risk provider contraction. This has been exacerbated by the requirements for English and Maths which create a rotating effect of resits for young people not able to progress to the required standard.
- Some SEND learners with Education & Health Care Plans cannot find a suitable local provider, and all schools have struggled to supply information on SEND students to training providers in a timely manner. This inhibits their capacity to respond with bespoke offers which may be required by the learners.
- Flowing from the recommendations of the LCR Area Based Review into FE, Hugh Baird College and South Sefton College is planned to be a type B merger involving the transfer of property, rights and future liabilities of South Sefton College (an LA maintained 16 to 18 school) to Hugh Baird College. The support of Sefton Council is critical to the success of this merger which is unique in bringing together a foundation school with a general further education college. Southport College and King George V College (KGV) is also planned to be a type

B merger involving the transfer of the property, rights and liabilities of KGV to Southport and the subsequent dissolution of the KGV Corporation. The second stage bringing together the 2 merged colleges is likely to involve the creation of a new governing board and a new management structure.

- The Sefton Employment & Skills Partners Group connects the colleges, training providers, Jobcentre Plus, economic development and the VCF sector, to receive youth entrants to the adult world of work.
- The re-convened Sefton Participation Group supervises the RPA tracking system and sets the agenda for 18-29 provision and progression, escalating issues as required.
- The LCR PASS Group co-ordinates action on post 16 issues among the LA officers and, has direct connection to the LCR working Group on NEETS convened as a result of the Area Based Review.

5. Progress on the Working Group Recommendations

Updates are provided as follows against each of the recommendations in the original O&S report.

Recommendation 1

To request head-teachers, and chairs of governors of high schools (including academies and free schools) within the Borough to consider increasing the breadth, range and quality of impartial advice and guidance provision for young people in schools, prior to leaving year 11, to receive advice on the full range of options available to them, and for information to also be made available to parents.

The September Offer was made in 2016 and 2017 and Career Connect Ltd have reported the results of their Activity Survey report

Schools, colleges and training providers are in the process of being issued with a customised extract from the Survey so they can assess their relative contribution to meeting the Participation Duty.

Sefton Education Partnership Board has initiated a conversation with the heads of Sefton's primary and secondary schools to improve pre-16 standards of English and Maths.

Career Connect Ltd, the Council's appointed CEIAG partner, are also commissioned by 11 Sefton Secondary schools, to deliver CEIAG services and are in regular dialogue with Head Teachers regarding the different services they offer, including a range of specialist programmes for students who are at risk of NEET. The Career Connect offer is designed to meet and exceed school's statutory responsibility to provide impartial information advice and guidance for students in Years 8 to 13.

Career Connect Ltd are also licensed providers of the nationally validated quality award, the Quality in Careers Standard, for schools and colleges. This enables schools to achieve a quality kitemark for CEIAG. Achieving a quality award is strongly

recommended by the Government as it enables schools and colleges to review the effectiveness and impact of the CEIAG they offer. Four Sefton schools currently hold the Quality Award with one more school working towards accreditation.

Recommendation 2

To request head-teachers of high schools and principals of colleges within the Borough to consider increasing the level of mentoring support and guidance for young people , in order for them to be more aware of the range of options available to them, prior to leaving school and college.

- Approximately 4 in 5 schools are contracted to Careers Connect for their Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) service. Schools regularly evaluate the effectiveness and Value for Money of their CEIAG support.
- In addition, schools are purchasing additional services to extend the offer to students e.g. employer participation in mock interviews (SEBP), or extra-curricular support for 15-16 year olds at risk of NEET (Career Connect).
- The National Careers Service has let a contract for Careers Enterprise Co-ordinators to target NEET “cold spots” in the Liverpool City Region, and The Work Company is developing an action plan with five schools and colleges in Sefton: Chesterfield, Maghull, Stanley, SSSFC and KGV.
- Sefton EBP has recruited a panel of industry mentors to work with young people in school to support and prepare them for further education and work.
- Career Connect is to re-engage with schools about the need to forward school-leaver information to the learner’s destination.
- Members will also note that the introduction of the Gatsby benchmarks as a quality standard for information advice and guidance in schools and colleges includes one area which specifically relates to “ Personal Guidance “.

Sefton Council has also co-invested in the Unlocking Potential social Impact bond delivered by Career Connect in schools. This programme is aimed at 14/15 year olds and 16/17 year olds developing their individual resilience, raising their aspirations, coping with stress and supporting students to achieve goals and outcomes. The key focus is on developing good mental wellbeing, improving attitude to learning, behaviour and attendance. This 13 week programme involves:

- Access to a personal resilience coach for up to a year.
- Weekly coaching sessions for 13 weeks in school or college.
- Mental Toughness and Carrus Assessment.
- Managing Stress, relaxation and self-control.
- Improving behaviour and developing a positive attitude to learning.
- Addressing attendance issues.
- Goal setting and personal action planning.
- Employability skills if appropriate.

- Opportunity to undertake an Entry Level Award or Level 1 Certificate in personal effectiveness.

Recommendation 3

To produce a follow-up report, to be submitted to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee(s) in twelve months' time, to include (i) whether the Council is receiving best value for money in terms of services provided within the NEETS area; and (ii) monitoring of looked after young people leaving Council care and their achievements or whether they subsequently fall into the NEETS category.

The Council has endeavoured to achieve best value by openly procuring an Information Advice and Guidance service in line with Contract Procurement Regulations.

An invitation to tender in 2013 attracted four applications from different companies. Following scrutiny of the applications and interviews, Career Connect Ltd were appointed and have been providing this service since then.

However, following extensive consideration of these issues through Informal Cabinet and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Skills, the Cabinet has taken the decision to explore a new approach for the future direction of IAG NEET services for Sefton. Focusing on service improvement and achieving best value, it has been resolved to shift towards an Outcomes based commissioning model which can secure additional resource through the inclusion of social investment. As a result, a contract extension has been arranged with the current provider so that a specification of a new service can be developed which secures these aims.

The Council has secured some Development Funding from the Life Chances Fund to undertake a Feasibility study intended to explore and test the key metrics of this Outcomes Based commissioning approach and help the Council identify suitable social investment partners. The intention is to develop an IAG service offer that comprises re-engagement support and market-focused careers guidance activity to prevent long term exclusion from learning and work, rolling this provision back to an earlier age than 16 so as to address issues for younger people before they fall into the 16/17 NEET categories for reporting under the LA's statutory duty.

Monitoring of Looked After Children and Care Leavers takes place quarterly at the Corporate Learning Board. A detailed report is submitted to the Board which now includes young people up to the age of 22. Further to this, Career Connect provide a dedicated resource working with the Corporate Parenting team, with a series of support activities and interventions. The council also provides a specific employability scheme of its own to give maximum support to those Care Leavers who are considered furthest from the employment market, provision which is monitored by the Corporate Parenting Board.

Furthermore, The Sefton Participation Group has asked Career Connect to:

- Map 14-29 providers and intermediaries, to establish Sefton's current strengths and weaknesses
- Organise (with partners) a meet-the-provider event for young people

- Contact employers of young people in employment but not in receipt of training, to remind them of their statutory obligations under RPA (the Council does not have an enforcement role as such)
- Survey the young people not currently meeting their duty to participate on what would draw them back into education, training or employment
- Data tracking systems that have been adapted specifically for LAC have become integral to the Early Help Intervention & Prevention practice in Sefton. These requirements will be incorporated into the Procurement of a new service offer going forward for 2018 and beyond.

Recommendation 4

To produce six monthly reports, to be submitted to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee, outlining the latest position with regard to the NEETS.

Reports have been provided on a six monthly basis in accordance with the requests of the Scrutiny Committee. However, with the re-organisation of responsibility for NEETs, the subsequent deletion of the post of Head of Service for Investment & Employment and the forthcoming adoption of the Sefton Economic Strategy, it is recommended that future reporting be undertaken as part of the Performance reporting system to be put in place once the Council formally adopts the Strategy, which is expected in 2018.

Recommendation 5

That the Council and its partners be encouraged to use all available statistical evidence to identify NEET hotspots and agree robust intervention targets to reduce numbers in these areas, together with agreed robust systems for monitoring and evaluating the impact of joint interventions.

The use of robust data and tracking systems has enabled the Council to identify “hotspots” for NEET. Joint work with projects such as Troubled Families, Youth Contract, Sefton Education Business Partnership, along with schools, colleges and training providers has taken. Sefton training providers have secured opportunities to meet directly with young people in order to better understand their needs in a variety of locations across the Borough.

Monthly contract management meetings with the current supplier are undertaken and this allows service delivery to be flexed in accordance with patterns of demand as they emerge.

A post-16 Participation Group supports joint working and an agreed system between the council, schools and Career Connect continues to provide an interchange of information designed to enable the swift “pick up” and tracking of NEET young people. This process could benefit from more resource to improve the flow of information between the Council commissioned NEET tracking system, Council departments and providers in order to provide more responsive, targeted provision.