

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 JANUARY 2018

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR 18-25 YEAR OLDS (INCLUDING APPRENTICESHIPS)

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Summary

This report asks the Committee to consider the final report of the in-depth Task Group review on Employment Opportunities for 18-25 Year Olds (including apprenticeships).

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 Under Chapter 4 of the Constitution (Part 5 – Overview and Scrutiny Rules - paragraph 21.1 (xviii), each overview and scrutiny committee has the responsibility to appoint time limited Task Groups to undertake in-depth reviews within the overall programme of reviews agreed each year by the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to make recommendations to the Council and Leader and Cabinet as appropriate. The topic of this review is within the remit of this Committee and the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Membership of the Task Group has been comprised of Members drawn from each of these committees.
- 1.2 The recommendations arising from the review are consistent with the Council's Policy Framework.

2. Background

- 2.1 In June 2011 the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to exercise a more pro-active role than previously in prioritising the programme of in-depth scrutiny review work. This followed a Council decision that a maximum of three reviews or themed meetings can be undertaken annually across all four Overview and Scrutiny Committees, in light of shrinking capacity across the organisation. This represented a shift from the previous position of multiple Task Groups, with no fixed timelines, running at any one time.

2.2 In line with best practice, the Committee also decided to adopt a more systematic approach to the selection of topics, with nominations submitted by each Committee, taking into account suggestions and advice from Directors and Deputy / Assistant Directors.

2.3 In December 2015 the Business Support O&S Committee agreed the following programme of Task Group topics:

- Review two (to follow the Task Group on Housing) - **How far has Medway gone in developing a dementia friendly community?**

This review reported to Cabinet in May 2017.

- Review three - **Employment Opportunities for 18-21 year olds (including apprenticeships)**

It was subsequently decided that the age cohort should be extended from 18-21 to 18-25 to better ensure the needs of vulnerable young people (who are supported up to the age of 25) are appropriately reflected in the work of the Task Group.

2.4 The Membership of the Task Group comprised Councillors Royle (Chairman), Gilry, Josie Iles, Johnson and Williams.

3. **Scope of the Review**

3.1 On 19 June 2017 the Task Group met to set the scope and determine the key lines of enquiry for this review. The Task Group had been set up to consider progress made by the Council in working with local and regional stakeholders to deliver a joined up approach to supporting young people aged 18 to 25 into employment and apprenticeship opportunities. In addition it evaluated the Council's progress in developing a "One Council" approach to promoting and delivering the skills and employability agenda in Medway.

3.2 The Task Group agreed four key lines of enquiry:

1. To consider the **NEET rate for 18-25 year olds** in Medway and the contributory factors.
2. To evaluate the **Council's role as community leader** in terms of a Medway Skills agenda working with partners locally and regionally to encourage the growth of the local job market and deliver outcomes around skills, training and employment for 18-25 year olds.
3. To evaluate the Council's **performance as an employer - 'leading by example'**.
4. To consider action required to address the particular **needs of vulnerable young people** including looked after children and those with disabilities in the 18-25 age range.

4. Methodology

- 4.1 The Task Group was briefed on the context for the review in terms of the legislative background, current national policy and the landscape at a regional and local level. In addition Members were provided with a range of background reading.
- 4.2 The Task Group was fortunate to be able to draw on the high quality evidence already recently gathered through extensive stakeholder engagement in the preparation of the Council's 16-19 Strategy, much of which was relevant to this review. The report of the recent Task Group on Support for Care Leavers was also valuable.
- 4.3 The Task Group met with a number of senior officers, young people from the Young People's Disability Group and also with apprentices currently working for the Council and former apprentices. The Task Group also spoke with representatives from the Department of Work and Pensions, Mid Kent College, Skillnet, Bradfields Academy and the Medway Parent and Carer's Forum. In addition, evidence relating to quality of careers advice in Medway's secondary schools was invited from the Regional Schools Commissioner.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations of the Task Group

- 5.1 The Task Group has reviewed the wide range of national policy initiatives and the significant level of activity underway across the Council and with regional and local partners to secure closer links between education providers and business, to support young people in the transition from education to employment and to develop effective interventions to bring down the number young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETS). The key finding of this review is that it is imperative to now bring all these plans and initiatives together and develop a more cohesive and collaborative approach to ensure the intended outcomes are achieved. The Task Group concluded that the soon to be established Medway Skills Board is best placed to do this and the Cabinet is asked to refer a number of recommendations arising from this review to the Board for attention as a priority.
- 5.2 The recommendations of the Task Group are set out in full in the Appendix.

6. Risk Management

- 6.1 There are no risks arising from the report. However, adoption by Cabinet of the recommendations would lead to various options being explored and, at that point, any risks would need to be assessed.

7. Implications for Looked After Children

- 7.1 One of the review's key lines of enquiry was to consider action required to address the particular needs of vulnerable young people including looked after children. Several of the Task Group's recommendations seek to improve the employment and training opportunities for this group.
- 7.2 The Council's Looked After Children Strategy 2015-2018 and the SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2016 - 2020 also helped inform the findings of the Task Group.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 Any service improvements as a result of the recommendations of this report will need to be delivered from within existing budgets. The work of the Task Group was supported by Democratic Services and officers from the Children and Adult Services and Regeneration, Culture and Environment Directorates.
- 8.2 There is a small budget held by Democratic Services to meet the cost of any visits, stakeholder events or expenses incurred by expert witnesses associated with the review. There were no costs incurred during this review.
- 8.3 Task Groups are advised to formulate recommendations in the context of the prevailing financial climate. The work of this Task Group was framed to complement rather than duplicate work already underway.

9. Legal implications

- 9.1 Medway Council has a legal obligation under section 149 Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality, and foster good relations between those with a protected characteristic (pregnancy and maternity, age discrimination, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it. To assist the Council in fulfilling these legal obligations a Diversity Impact Assessment is attached to the report of the Task Group.
- 9.2 There are no other legal implications arising from the recommendations. However, officers may need to consider the legal implications of some recommendations as the proposals are developed.

10. Equality

- 10.1 A Diversity Impact Assessment is attached to the report of the Task Group.

11. Recommendation

- 11.1 The Committee is asked to consider the report and recommendations made by the Employment Opportunities Task Group set out at Appendix A and agree to recommend it to Cabinet on 6 February.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Report from the Employment Opportunities Task Group

Background Papers:

The background papers relied on in producing the report from the Task Group are set out within the main report.

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A report prepared by a Task Group of the Children and Young People and the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committees

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1. FOREWORD

- 1.1 On behalf of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, we are pleased to present the review entitled 'Employment Opportunities for 18-25 Year Olds (Including Apprenticeships)', with its associated recommendations, to Medway Council's Cabinet.
- 1.2 The Task Group has concluded that the Council has a clearly stated ambition and associated actions featuring in multiple strategies and plans to bring education and businesses together to ensure that young people have the knowledge and skills they need to secure meaningful employment. The Task Group welcomes the proposed establishment of a Medway Skills Board by the Cabinet with the potential to map progress and gaps and to develop a more cohesive and collaborative approach in this area across the various sectors at a local level. The recommendations in this report highlight the importance of stepping up support for young people aged 18-25 years to help them deal with the particular challenges they face in becoming work ready and able to secure meaningful employment with consequential benefits to the community and economy of Medway.
- 1.3 The Task Group would like to thank all the witnesses who helped us to gather evidence at our meetings, particularly those representing external organisations and the young people we spoke to; for the time they have given to the Task Group and most importantly, for the invaluable information and insights they provided. The Task Group wished to place on record particular thanks to the group of Medway employees who had been Medway apprentices and the young people from the Young People's Disability Group all of whom who gave up an evening to discuss their experiences. The Task Group were impressed by the positive outlook of these young people and their determination to succeed in their future.

THE TASK GROUP



Councillor David Royle (Chairman)



Councillor Dorte
Gilry



Councillor Josie
Iles



Councillor Clive
Johnson



Councillor John
Williams

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 Delivering skilled and employable young people is a cross-cutting issue impacting on people's health, well-being and social mobility as well as Medway's growth and regeneration ambitions.
- 2.2 In comparison with the South East, Medway continues to underperform in supporting its young people to secure opportunities for employment and training. This has short and long term implications.
- 2.3 Medway's Council Plan to 2021 has clear priorities, which all relate to bettering our economic position. Through economic delivery, Medway will be "a place to be proud of", enable "Medway's people to realise their potential", and "maximise regeneration and economic growth".
- 2.4 The 16-19 Strategy agreed by Cabinet in June 2016 outlined 5 goals for 2020 to ensure that young people are able to access the best opportunities and contribute the growth of Medway:
1. Young People are prepared so they are ready to learn and work
 2. Young people are equipped to meet current and future skills needs of the local and national economy
 3. Young people are supported to make informed career and skills development choice
 4. Barriers to participation are overcome
 5. All stakeholders work collaboratively to increase young people's readiness to learn and work
- 2.5 Other key strategies include Medway Council's Looked after Children Strategy 2015-2018 and Medway Council's SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2016 -2020, both of which map ambitions and intended action to support transition and ensure readiness for work for our more vulnerable young people.
- 2.6 The Task Group chose a scope for this review that would not duplicate the work already undertaken to map the issues relating to the employment of our Young People but rather to provide an overview of where we are and what needs to happen next. The Task Group gathered evidence in line with the following key lines of enquiry:
- To consider the **Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) rate for 18-25 year olds** in Medway and the contributory factors.
 - To evaluate the **Council's role as community leader** in terms of a Medway Skills agenda working with partners locally and regionally to encourage the growth of the local job market and deliver outcomes around skills, training and employment for 18-25 year olds.
 - To evaluate the Council's **performance as an employer - leading by example**'.
 - To consider action required to address the particular **needs of vulnerable young people** including looked after children and those with disabilities in the 18-25 age range.

- 2.7 The Task Group has reviewed the wide range of national policy initiatives and the significant level of activity underway across the Council and with regional and local partners to secure closer links between education providers and business, to support young people in the transition from education to employment and to develop effective interventions to bring down the number young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETS). The key finding of this review is that it is imperative to now bring all these plans and initiatives together and develop a more cohesive and collaborative approach to ensure the intended outcomes are achieved. The Medway Skills Board is best placed to do this and the Cabinet is asked to refer the recommendations arising from this review to the Board for attention as a priority.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The latest statistics¹ on youth unemployment in the UK tell us that 524,000 young people aged 16 to 24 were unemployed in June to August 2017, 38,000 fewer than the previous quarter and 97,000 fewer than the year before. The unemployment rate (the proportion of the economically active population who were unemployed) for 16 to 24 year olds was 11.9% down from 13.7% a year ago.
- 3.2 Excluding young people in full-time education, 343,000 people aged 16-24 were unemployed in June-August 2017, 21,000 fewer than the previous quarter and down 67,000 from the year before.
- 3.3 The unemployment rate for 16-24 year olds not in full-time education was 10.2% compared to 12% a year ago.
- 3.4 Whilst the statistics tell us that youth unemployment has fallen substantially in recent years aided by a buoyant jobs market and targeted Job Centre Plus programmes, the youth unemployment rate is still more than double the general unemployment rate and some groups of young people remain particularly vulnerable to long-term unemployment with transition from education to work being a challenge for many.
- 3.5 This Task Group was established because Medway Council recognises that delivering skilled and employable young people is a cross-cutting issue impacting on people's health, well-being and social mobility as well as Medway's growth and regeneration ambitions.
- 3.6 In comparison with the South East, Medway continues to under perform in supporting its young people to secure opportunities for employment and training with short and long term implications. More work is needed to bring together education providers and employers so that young people are supported to develop skills matching the available jobs in Medway.
- 3.7 Whilst numerous teams within the Council are working on different elements of the skills and employability agenda it was considered that a Scrutiny Task Group could take an overview of the current position and add some insight into opportunities to do more, with a focus on graduates and apprenticeships. This Task Group ran concurrently with work the Cabinet had initiated to establish a Skills Board for Medway. It is hoped the findings and recommendations in this report will influence the aims and priorities of the Skills Board as it develops its programme of activity. The Task Group can see significant scope for the Skills Board to more closely align the local skills system with the needs of local business to secure a better future for young people studying and working in Medway.
- 3.8 The Task Group was fortunate in being able to draw on the evidence and findings underpinning the Medway 16-19 Strategy which was adopted by the Cabinet in June 2016 setting out a clear plan for increasing participation in learning for 16 and 17 year olds, improving the transition for young people into the labour market and

¹ Youth unemployment statistics publish 18 October 2017 by House of Commons Library

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reducing the levels of those not in education, employment and training (NEETS) and in “not known” destinations.

- 3.9 The findings and recommendations of the Support for Care Leavers Task Group, which were accepted by Cabinet in January 2016, also provided valuable evidence. The report of Support for Care Leavers Task Group included recommendations aimed at improving the offer of traineeships and apprenticeships in Medway for Care Leavers and ensuring access to high quality careers advice. Since this Task Group reported on its findings the Children and Social Work Act 2017 has placed a new duty on Local Authorities to publish their offer for Care Leavers (including education, training and employment) and to provide personal advisers up to age 25.

4. SETTING THE CONTEXT

A) Legal framework – key provisions

- 4.1 Whilst the Government provides the framework and funding to increase the number of young people participating in education or training, responsibility and accountability lies with Local Authorities. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to “encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in education or training”. They need to ensure there is sufficient education and training provision within their area, and appropriate support for those with special educational needs and disabilities. The Department for Education monitors the performance of Local Authorities in delivering these duties, and specifically in their tracking and supporting of 16 and 17 year olds. All 16 and 17 year olds are entitled to an offer of a suitable place in education or training under the “September Guarantee” regardless of what qualifications they had gained when they left school.
- 4.2 In 2013 the participation age was raised and young people are now required to continue in education or training until at least their 18th birthday.
- 4.3 Since September 2013, Local Authority maintained schools have been under a duty to provide impartial careers guidance to pupils aged 12 to 18. The Department for Education has published statutory guidance for maintained schools on their duty to provide careers guidance.
- 4.4 Many academies and free schools are subject to the duties relating to careers guidance through their funding agreements. Academies without the requirement are encouraged to follow the guidance as a statement of good practice. There is also separate “non-statutory” good practice DfE guidance on this issue.
- 4.5 All Further Education (FE) colleges and sixth colleges have been required to secure access to independent careers guidance from September 2013. There are no statutory requirements around the provision of careers advice in Higher Education institutes (HEIs).

B) National Policy Framework

4.6 Careers advice

- 4.6.1 There has been widespread criticism of the quality of much of the careers advice provided to young people.
- 4.6.2 The National Careers Service (NCS) was launched in April 2012 to provide people over 13 years old with information, advice and guidance on learning, training and work opportunities. The service offers confidential and impartial advice, supported by qualified careers advisers on a face-to-face, telephone or online basis and is co-located in Jobcentre Plus offices.
- 4.6.3 The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC), which is employer led and independent of Government, provides improved careers education and advice to school pupils aged 12 to 18. The company set up a Careers and Enterprise Fund

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which is allocated to organisations who have a “proven understanding of how to increase the number of encounters young people have with employers”. In 2016 £5m was invested in 50 careers and enterprise programmes.

- 4.6.4 In January 2016 the then Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan, announced that the Government would legislate at the earliest opportunity to require schools to ensure non-academic routes received equal airtime with academic routes in schools career advice. Schools would be required by law to collaborate with colleges, university technical colleges and other training providers to ensure this was done.
- 4.6.5 Provisions, (which are not yet in force) have been included in the Technical and Further Education Act requiring schools to admit providers of technical education and apprenticeships to contact pupils to promote their courses.
- 4.6.6 A House of Commons Sub Committee on Education, Skills and the Economy, (formed by Members of the Education Committee and the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee) published its report in July 2016 recommending a specific careers guidance judgement from OFSTED, that all Government funded careers programmes be brought within the remit of the CEC and that careers guidance at all levels should be the responsibility of one Minister and one Department. In its response the Government has rejected the recommendations relating to OFSTED and the CEC, although careers guidance has now been brought within the remit of one Minister at the Department for Education.
- 4.6.7 In February 2017, Robert Halfon, the then Apprenticeships and Skills Minister confirmed that a comprehensive careers strategy for all ages would be published by the Government later in 2017, although this has not yet happened. At the time he acknowledged that providing high quality careers guidance and support was not just a question of funding, but of how schools decide to spend their funding. He stated that there is a very real gap between what employers are seeking and the skills that people currently have and that “we need to level the playing field between technical and academic education, so that more and more young people are aware of the benefits of technical education”. The Industrial Strategy launched by the Government on 27 November gives a commitment that a comprehensive careers strategy will be published shortly that will “set out plans to improve the quality and coverage of careers advice for people of all ages”. The strategy aims to improve the quality and coverage of careers advice in schools and colleges.

4.7 Employment Opportunities

- 4.7.1 In 2015 the Government published its Strategy for raising UK productivity, “Fixing the Foundations” which sets out clear objectives to raise skills levels.
- 4.7.2 In March 2017 the House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee published a report on Employment Opportunities for Young People which concluded that youth employment constituted a special case warranting targeted support. The report discussed the need for a particular focus on new apprenticeships, action to address skills shortages and Job centre Plus working more proactively with employers, schools, colleges and apprenticeship providers. The importance of support for schools to deliver careers advice and guidance (IAG) and the need for support programmes for NEETs was highlighted in the report.

4.7.3 National policies² to improve the employability of young people include:

- a) **The Youth Engagement Fund** aimed at improving the education outcomes of disadvantaged young people aged 14 – 17 and therefore improve their employability. It is being funded through social impact bonds, with service providers running projects aimed at preventing people from becoming NEET.
- b) **The Fair Chance Fund** which provides sustained housing, employment and educational support for homeless 18 to 24 year olds.
- c) **Adult Education Budget** which funds a range of “second chance” further education provision for 19-23 year olds, free training (including pre-employment support) for unemployed people aged 19+ which helps those with few or no qualifications get into work and free English and free English and maths training.
- d) **European Social Fund** which provides funding for projects to increase employment levels, in particular among young people and those struggling to get a job with a focus on disadvantaged groups, including disabled people. It aims to provide skills training and support to transition from unemployment into work.
- e) **Apprenticeships and Traineeships** -The Government has committed to reaching 3 million apprenticeship starts in England by 2020. The Enterprise Act 2016 provided the Secretary of State with the power to set targets for apprenticeships in public bodies in England to contribute towards meeting national targets. Large employers across the UK started paying the apprenticeship levy in April 2017 and a new funding system was introduced in England in May 2017. The Institute for Apprenticeships was launched in May 2016 to regulate the quality of apprenticeships.

Traineeships providing education, training and work experience over 6 months are also available to people aged under 24 who are unemployed and have little work experience.
- f) **Supported Internships** - Young people with learning difficulties and disabilities have access to Supported Internships. These are structured study programmes based primarily at an employer which normally last for a year and include unpaid work of at least six months. Where possible, they will then support the young person to move into employment at the end of the programme.
- g) **Destination measures** statistics show, for each school, college and local authority in England, the number of young people going into education, employment or training the year after finishing Key Stage 4 or Key Stage 5. They also show the number of young people who were NEET in this year.

² House of Commons Briefing paper published 24 August 2017; NEET: Young People not in Education, Employment or Training

- h) **Employer National Insurance Contributions** for those under the age of 21 were abolished in April 2015 (with the exception of those earning more than the Upper Earnings Limit). They were abolished for apprentices aged under 25 on earnings up to the upper earnings limit from April 2016.

4.8 Jobcentre Plus Support

- a) **Jobcentre Plus support for young people in school** was launched in January 2016. As part of this initiative, local Jobcentre Plus advisers offer school pupils aged 12 to 18 advice on the labour market and advice on some of the job options available to them (such as apprenticeships and traineeships). Each school decides on the level of support that they get from the advisors, but this could include work experience schemes or one-to-one advice.

- b) **Work Coaches** are front-line DWP staff based in Jobcentres who support unemployed people into work by “challenging, motivating, providing personalised advice and using knowledge of local labour markets”.

They also provide support to those who are working and still claiming Universal Credit (known as ‘in-work claimants’) with the aim of encouraging these claimants to increase their earnings through taking on extra work or gaining higher wages.

- c) **Work Experience and volunteering** - the Government has a number of schemes involving work experience placements as part of its wider welfare-to-work policies. These will be set up by a Jobcentre Plus work coach.

Work Experience, the largest of these programmes, is targeted at young people who are getting Jobseeker’s Allowance and are aged between 16 and 24. The placements will last between two and eight weeks.

Work Trials give someone on Jobseeker’s Allowance the opportunity to try a job for up to 30 working days, and they may be offered the job at the end of the trial.

Work Together provides an opportunity for someone who is seeking work to volunteer with a local organisation.

- d) **Welfare to Work Programmes** - support to help unemployed people find a job has been provided through the Work Programme, although referrals to the scheme ended at the end of March 2017. It will be provided through the Work and Health Programme after it is launched at some point between November 2017 and March 2018. The Employ Medway Advice Centre was successful in bidding with the Prime Shaw Trust for the contract to deliver the Work and Health Programme in Medway. The Work and Health Programme will provide specialised support for those unemployed for over two years and, on a voluntary basis, to those with health conditions or disabilities. The Programme will target people who with specialist support are likely to be able to find work within 12 months. It takes the place of two existing welfare-to-work schemes, the Work Programme and Work Choice.

Unemployed individuals were referred onto the programme by their local Jobcentre Plus after they had been receiving Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) for a minimum amount of time. JSA claimants aged 18-24 were referred after nine months unless they faced significant disadvantage. However 18 year old NEET JSA claimants were referred after only three months.

- e) **Youth Obligation** - In April 2017 Youth Obligation was introduced in Universal Credit full service areas. Through this scheme, intensive support is provided for those 18 to 21 year olds who are expected to be looking for work within 6 months of making a Universal Credit claim. After 6 months they are expected to apply for an apprenticeship, traineeship, gain work-based skills or take up a work placement.
- f) **New Enterprise Allowance** – this scheme provides money and support to help JSA or ESA claimants start or expand their own business. If someone has a business idea and is accepted onto the scheme, then they will get a business mentor and a weekly allowance for up to 26 weeks. They can also apply for a loan to help with start-up costs.

C) Local Government Association

- 4.9 In July 2017 the Local Government Association published new research estimating that 12 million people will be without a job or in work they are over qualified for by 2024. The LGA is calling for new powers to address the failings of an overly fragmented, confusing, untargeted and ineffective employment and skills system. It is calling for the Government to give groups of Local Authorities across England the power and funding to deliver a one-stop "Work Local" service for skills, apprenticeship, employment, careers advice and business support provision within five years. It would bring together local skills planning, oversee job support including Job Centre Plus and the Work and Health Programme and coordinate careers advice and guidance for young people and adults. The LGA proposals are set out in full in its paper, Work Local: Our vision for an integrated and devolved employment and skills service.

D) Best practice and experience elsewhere

- 4.10 The Task Group has considered a range of initiatives and innovative practice across other local Authorities and believes the new Medway Skills Board could learn much from this experience.
- 4.11 In its 2014 publication, "Councils supporting youth transitions into work and learning" the Local Government Association has published a wide range of case studies which demonstrates the breadth of work Councils are undertaking with their partners to address preparedness for transition, the impact of personal advisers, planning post-16 provision across local areas, developing and advising on vocational routes and brokering employer leadership and support into work. In the introductory statement to this paper the Chair of the LGA Children and Young People's Board highlights the following three principles that must underpin reform, building on the experiences of Councils, the findings from the Whole Place

Community Budgets, City Deals and independent reviews, including the Heseltine Review and the Youth Unemployment Commission:

- Personal advisers for vulnerable groups
- Coherent and responsive post-16 pathways across places
- Genuine and simplified employer leadership within all services

E) The position in Medway

- 4.12 Early on in its programme of activity the Task Group acknowledged the complex landscape of strategic, statutory, and operational responsibilities which represented the backdrop to this review. Research associated with production of this report involved surveying the policies of the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department for Business Innovation and Skills, the Department for Education and developments at the level of Local Authorities in the context of devolution of employment and skills funding in many areas of the country.
- 4.13 At a regional level Medway is part of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) Skills Advisory Group, the Thames Gateway Kent Partnership and the Kent and Medway Skills Commission all of which seek to provide vision and strategic leadership with the aim of delivering sustainable growth and job creation. Medway also has important relationships with schools, FE colleges, Universities and Local Businesses.
- 4.14 More recently the Department for Education Kent Area Review was undertaken. This was one of 40 Area reviews of all general FE and 6th form colleges in England. It examined provision across Kent and Medway to assess financial stability, efficiency, capacity to meet present and future needs of individual students and demands of employers. The Area Review recommendations focus on actions for Mid Kent College, KCC Community Learning and Skills together with more collaborative working to improve effectiveness of transition and the establishment of a Kent and Medway Strategic Forum to meet High Needs and SEN demand.
- 4.15 Medway's Council Plan to 2021 which sets out the Council's ambitions and priorities relating to bettering the area's economic position states that through economic delivery Medway Council wants to make Medway a "place to be proud of", to enable Medway's People to realise their potential and to "maximise regeneration and economic growth".
- 4.16 The 16-19 Strategy adopted by Cabinet in June 2016 was the product of whole system review involving extensive stakeholder engagement. The Strategy set out the following 5 goals for 2020 all of which chime with national and regional aims and priorities:
- i. Young People are prepared so they are ready to learn and work
 - ii. Young people are equipped to meet current and future skills needs of the local and national economy
 - iii. Young people are supported to make informed career and skills development choices
 - iv. Barriers to participation are overcome

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- v. All stakeholders work collaboratively to increase young people's readiness to learn and work

4.17. Other key Strategies include Medway Council's Looked After Children Strategy 2015-2018 and Medway Council's SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2016 - 2020 both of which map ambitions and intended action to support transition and ensure readiness for work for our more vulnerable young people

4.18 At the same time as the Task Group was conducting this review the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation has been developing a Medway Skills Agenda covering all ages which will seek to engender a more holistic system-wide approach and to foster links between those demanding skills and the skills providers.

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5. METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

- 5.1 On 19th June 2017 the Task Group met to set the scope and determine the key lines of enquiry for this review. The Task Group had been set up to consider progress made by the Council in working with local and regional stakeholders to deliver a joined up approach to supporting young people aged 18 to 25 into employment and apprenticeship opportunities. In addition it evaluated the Council's progress in developing a "One Council" approach to promoting and delivering the skills and employability agenda in Medway.
- 5.2 The Task Group was briefed on the context for the review in terms of the legislative background, current national policy and the landscape at a regional and local level. Members had been provided with a range of background reading including:
- **Medway Council Plan 2016/17 to 2020/21**
 - **The Council's 16-19 Strategy**
 - **Report of the DfE Kent and Medway Area review of further education and sixth form colleges** which provides an overview of the emerging themes and recommendations from the DfE Kent Area Review, which was set up to establish the best institutional structure to meet the needs of learners and employers within Kent and Medway.
 - **The South East Local Economic Partnership Growth Deal 2016/17-21** which sets out the SE Local Economic Partnership's commitment to delivering high-level infrastructure, housing, employment and skills projects over the period 2016-2021, including 'Investment in colleges and other training providers, helping to raise skill levels and ensure that local people can compete for jobs in a fast-changing economy'. The Growth Deal was signed in June 2014.
 - **Adult Learning, Employment and Skills Strategy 2015-18** which sets out Kent County Council's plans for improving the skills and qualifications of the adult population of Kent and neighbouring areas, including Medway. Delivery of the strategy is overseen by the Skills Commission, a sub-group of the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership.
 - **Employment Opportunities for Young People**, a report of the House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee published in March 2017 assessing the strategies and plans put in place by the government (before the General Election in June 2017) for supporting young people into employment and skills settings, the role of Jobcentre Plus in supporting young people to access the job market, and the general barriers to employment faced by young people.
 - **Apprenticeships Policy in England: 2017** – a House of Commons Briefing Paper which provides an overview of the current legislative and policy developments affecting apprenticeships in England, including government targets for apprenticeships, the launch of the Apprenticeship Levy and developments around the minimum wage and youth wage.

Employment Opportunities for 18-25 Year Olds (including Apprenticeships)

- 5.3 The Task Group was fortunate to be able to draw on the high quality evidence already recently gathered through extensive stakeholder engagement in the preparation of the Council's 16-19 Strategy, much of which was relevant to this review. The report of the recent Task Group on Support for Care Leavers was also valuable.
- 5.4 Against the backdrop of national and regional policy and priorities as described in section 4 of this report (Setting the Context) and in the background reading material the Task Group agreed to focus its activities across four key lines of enquiry as follows:
- i. To consider the **NEET rate for 18-25 year olds** in Medway and the contributory factors
 - ii. To evaluate the **Council's role as community leader** in terms of a Medway Skills agenda working with partners locally and regionally to encourage the growth of the local job market and deliver outcomes around skills, training and employment for 18-25 year olds
 - iii. To evaluate the Council's **performance as an employer - 'leading by example'**
 - iv. To consider action required to address the particular **needs of vulnerable young people** including looked after children and those with disabilities in the 18-25 age range
- 5.5 The methodology for the review was agreed by the Task Group to include some desk top research together with a series of "round table" evidence sessions involving a range of stakeholders as set out below:

Date	Members in attendance	Other attendees	Purpose
19 June 2017	Councillors Gilry, Josie Iles, Johnson, Royle and Williams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joseph Dance Democratic Services Officer • Sunny Ee, Head of Regeneration Delivery • Martin Hall, Greenspaces and Skills Programme Manager • Helen Jones, Assistant Director, Commissioning, Business and Intelligence • Julie Keith, Head of Democratic Services • Carrie McKenzie, Chief People Officer • Julie Taylor, Educational Psychologist • Jackie Wood, Head of Provider Services, Children's Social Care 	<p>To receive a briefing on the legislative framework and national, regional and local context underpinning the review.</p> <p>To agree the scope and key lines of enquiry</p> <p>To consider the Medway NEET rate for 18 -25 year olds and the contributory factors</p>

Employment Opportunities for 18-25 Year Olds (including Apprenticeships)

Date	Members in attendance	Other attendees	Purpose
27 July 2017	Councillors Gilry, Josie Iles, Johnson, Royle and Williams	<p>Current and former Apprentices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simon, Recruitment Consultant, Business Development (MCG) • Sam, Executive Support Apprentice, Children and adult Services • Alex, Recruitment Consultant, Business Development (Ocelot) • Amber, Housing Apprentice, Housing Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joanne Budd, Organisational Change Consultant • Joseph Dance, Democratic Services Officer • Carrie Mckenzie, Chief People Officer • Angela Rowe, Business Development Manager 	To evaluate the Council's performance as an Employer – leading by example
6 September 2017	Councillors Gilry, Johnson, Royle and Williams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eileen Bishop, Employer and External Manager, Job Centre Plus (Chatham), Department for Work and Pensions • Keith Clear, Medway Parent and Carer's Forum • Gemma Cooper, Skillnet • Joseph Dance Democratic Services Officer • Martin Hall, Greenspaces and Skills Programme Manager • Liz Halton, Assistant Principal, Bradfields Academy • Chris Hare, Executive Director for Enterprise and Employer Engagement, Mid Kent College • Carly, Summer and Toni (Young People's Disability Group) • Julie Taylor, Educational Psychologist 	To evaluate the Council's role as Community Leader in terms of a Medway Skills agenda working with partners locally and regionally to encourage the growth of the local job market and deliver outcomes around skills, training and employment for 18-25 year olds

Employment Opportunities for 18-25 Year Olds (including Apprenticeships)

Date	Members in attendance	Other attendees	Purpose
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Turner, Democratic Service Officer • Dave Waters, Vice Principal of Bradfield Academy 	
10 October 2017	Councillors Gilry, Josie Iles, Johnson, Royle and Williams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Turner, Democratic Services Officer • Andy Willetts, Head of Service – Early Help and Targeted Services 	To take evidence from the Head of Early Help and Targeted Support in relation to key lines of enquiry 2 and 3; the Council's role as Community Leader and the needs of vulnerable young people
13 November 2017	Councillors Gilry, Josie Iles, Johnson, Royle and Williams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martin Hall, Greenspaces and Skills Programme Manager • Helen Jones, Assistant Director, Commissioning, Business and Intelligence • Julie Keith, Head of Democratic Services 	To consider findings and draft recommendations
6 December 2017	Councillors Gilry, Josie Iles, Johnson, Royle and Williams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martin Hall, Greenspaces and Skills Programme Manager • Michael Turner, Democratic Services Officer 	To agree a final report and recommendations for Submission to the Children and Young People and Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

6. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE COLLECTED AND FINDINGS

This section of the report sets out the evidence collected by the Task Group and its findings and conclusions together with associated recommendations.

Section 1: The NEET rate for 18-25 year olds in Medway and contributory factors (KLOE 1)

The Task Group met with Sunny Ee, Head of Regeneration Delivery, Martin Hall, Greenspaces and Skills Programme Manager, Helen Jones, Assistant Director, Commissioning, Business and Intelligence, Carrie McKenzie, Chief People Officer Julie Taylor, Educational Psychologist, Andy Willetts, Head of Service – Early Help and Targeted Services and Jackie Wood, Head of Provider Services to take evidence for this key line of enquiry.

6.1 Local Authority statutory functions

6.1.1 Local Authorities have a critical role in supporting young people to access education and training and it is crucial to have an understanding of the characteristics and current activity of the young people in the area.

6.1.2 The Government's approach gives Local Authorities freedom and flexibility in deciding how to fulfil the duty to

- Secure sufficient suitable education and training provision for all young people in their area who are over compulsory school age but under 19 or aged 10 to 25 and for whom an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC) Plan is maintained.
- Maintain a strategic overview of provision available in the area and gaps in provision.
- Support all young people aged 13 -19 and those between 20 and 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), encouraging, enabling or assisting them to participate in education or training.

6.2 National Position

6.2.1 In the second quarter of 2017, 790,000 people aged 16-24 were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). This represents 11.1% of all people in this age group.

6.2.2 In terms of trends, the proportion of 16-24 year olds who were NEET remained relatively steady between 2002 and 2008 and at the beginning of 2008 13.4% were NEET. However, following the 2008 recession the proportion increased, peaking in July-September 2011 when 16.9% of 16-24 year olds were NEET (1.25 million people). Since then the number of people who are NEET has been falling.

Employment Opportunities for 18-25 Year Olds (including Apprenticeships)

- 6.2.3 It is often mistakenly thought that someone cannot be NEET unless they are unemployed but that is not the case. Likewise, not all unemployed people will be NEET.
- 6.2.4 The key characteristics of people who are NEET using data³ over the four quarters to Q1 2017 are:
- The proportion of 16-24 year olds who were NEET was higher for those with disabilities (30%) than those without (9%).
 - A higher proportion of 16-24 year olds without any qualifications were NEET (25%) than the proportion of those qualified to GCSE level and above (10%).
 - By ethnicity, the proportion of 16-24 year olds who were NEET was highest for those from Pakistani/Bangladeshi backgrounds (16%) and lowest for those from Indian/Chinese/Other Asian backgrounds (7%).

6.3 Factors in becoming NEET

- 6.3.1 An Audit Commission report from July 2010 (Against the Odds) examined NEET characteristics, the geographic distribution of NEET people and how government can work effectively to help them. The table below summarises the increased likelihood of young people becoming NEET associated with certain risk factors.

Increased chances of being NEET

Factor	Increase in chance of being NEET for six months or more
Being NEET at least once before	7.9 times more likely
Pregnancy or parenthood	2.8 times more likely
Supervision by youth offending team	2.6 times more likely
Fewer than three months post-16 education	2.3 times more likely
Disclosed substance abuse	2.1 times more likely
Responsibilities as a carer	2.0 times more likely

- 6.3.2 A Department for Education funded report on students who are NEET by the Institute of Education (September 2014) concluded the following in terms of risk factors:

- The most significant educational risk factor was low educational attainment at GCSE. Reasons cited for low GCSE attainment included a lack of motivation, poor health (physical and mental) and having Special Educational Needs.

³ Figures from the ONS Labour Force Survey

Employment Opportunities for 18-25 Year Olds (including Apprenticeships)

- A range of personal risk factors were identified including health problems, caring responsibilities and difficult family circumstances (such as being in care or experiencing a breakdown in relationship with parents).
- Structural risk factors were also identified which included difficult labour market conditions, a lack of training and apprenticeship opportunities and welfare support providing a higher income than potential wages.

6.4 Regional Position

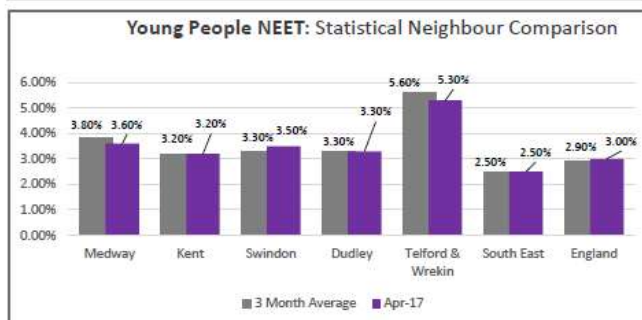
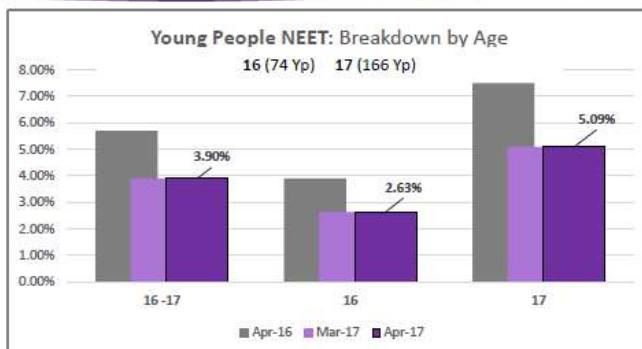
6.4.1 As at the second quarter of 2017 Yorkshire and Humberside had the highest proportion of young people who were NEET aged 16-24 years old (14.7%) and London had the lowest (9.0%). The figure for the South East was 9.4% and 11.4% for England. The average percentage across all regions for this group in the second quarter was 11.8%.

6.4.2 As at the first quarter 2017 West Midlands had the highest proportion of young people who were NEET aged 16-24 years old (15.0%) and London had the lowest (8.6%). The figure for the South East was 8.7% and 11.1% for England. The average percentage across all regions for this group in the first quarter was 11.5%.

6.5 Medway Position

6.5.1 At the end of June 2017 3.8% of 16 and 17 year olds were NEET. This equates to 256 young people, many of whom have multiple needs.

16 & 17 year old young people that are NEET - Apr 17



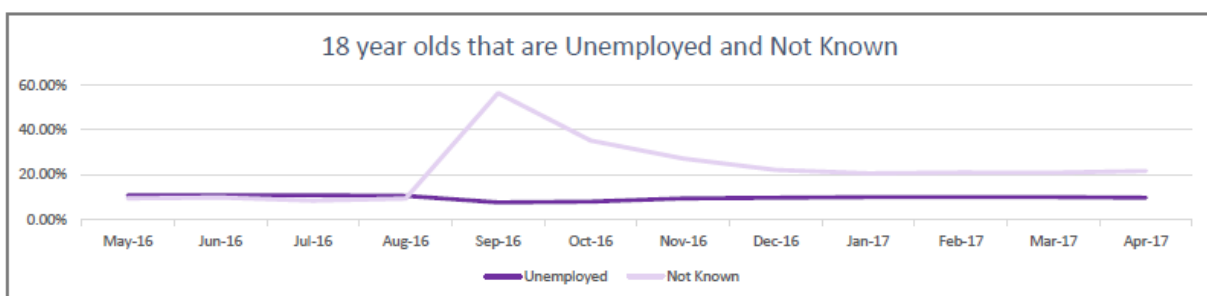
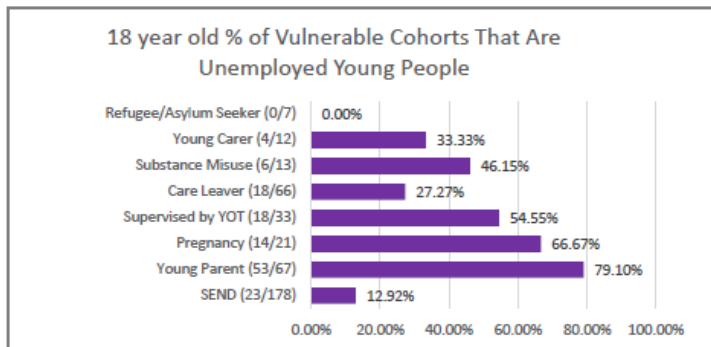
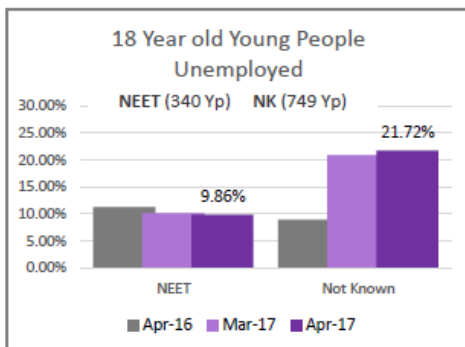
Ward	Apr-17	Mar-17
Chatham Central (27 Yp)	6.04%	6.01%
Cuxton & Halling (3)	2.07%	2.74%
Gillingham North (28)	5.92%	6.69%
Gillingham South (23)	5.20%	6.35%
Hempstead & Wigmore (4)	2.04%	2.55%
Lordswood & Capstone (3)	1.55%	1.55%
Luton & Wayfield (27)	7.03%	8.29%
Peninsula (11)	3.28%	4.48%
Princes Park (7)	2.76%	2.72%
Rainham Central (2)	0.73%	0.72%
Rainham North (3)	1.52%	2.01%
Rainham South (2)	0.60%	0.60%
River (12)	6.52%	4.95%
Rochester East (9)	3.83%	4.72%
Rochester S & Horsted (0)	0.00%	0.00%
Rochester West (6)	2.74%	3.23%
Strood North (9)	2.55%	2.84%
Strood Rural (12)	3.27%	2.72%
Strood South (17)	4.15%	5.39%
Twydall (6)	1.82%	2.11%
Walderslade (5)	1.92%	1.91%
Watling (6)	2.41%	2.41%

* These figures are based on Academic Age

Employment Opportunities for 18-25 Year Olds (including Apprenticeships)

18 year olds - Apr 17

Academic Age 18 year olds are no longer under statutory requirement to be tracked. This information is for local knowledge only



* These figures are based on Academic Age

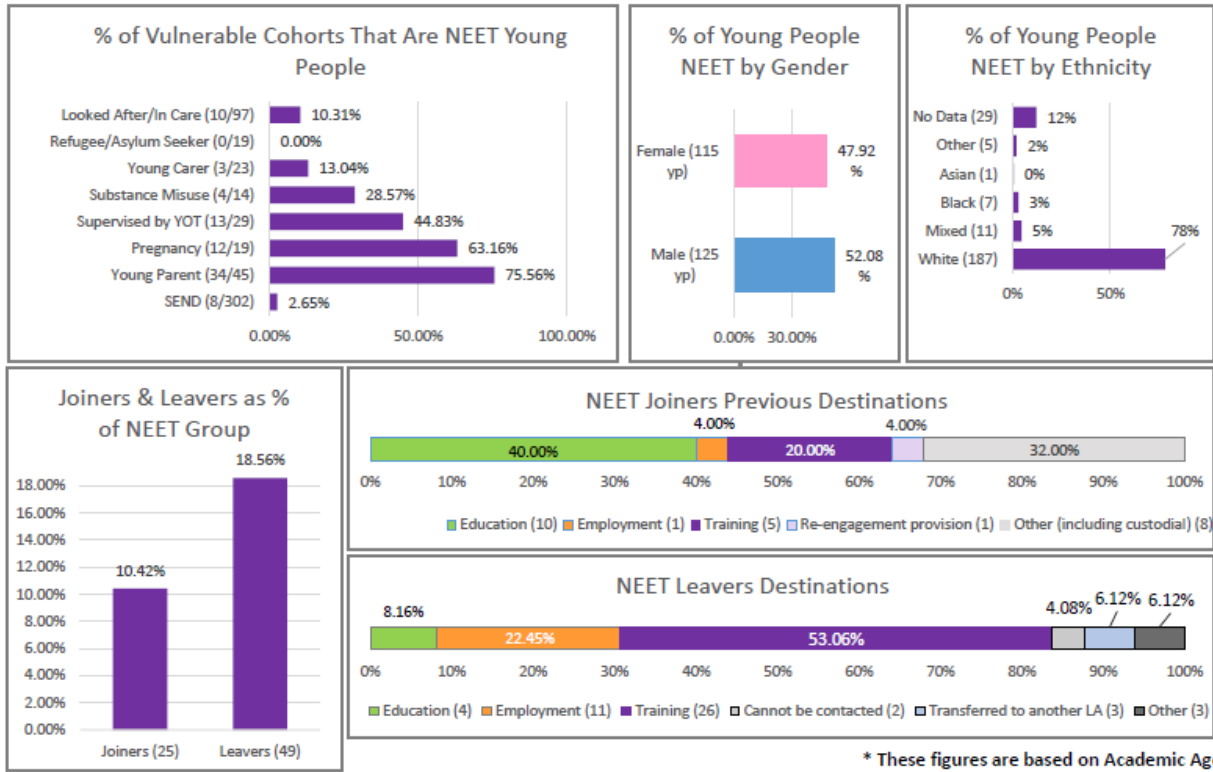
6.5.2 Unemployment levels for 18-24 year olds has decreased in Medway, with the volume of people in that age bracket claiming out of work benefits reducing by some 57% since 2013. This has coincided with an increasing proportion of 18-24 year olds in employment.

6.5.3 The Task Group heard that there was an intention to use information about NEETS to make links with what was known about apprenticeship and employment opportunities. For example, if there was an event to encourage apprenticeships in catering then this could be flagged with those NEETS who were interested in this career. It should be possible to use information about NEETS interests more intelligently to help employers and the regeneration agenda.

6.6 Evaluation of contributory factors in Medway

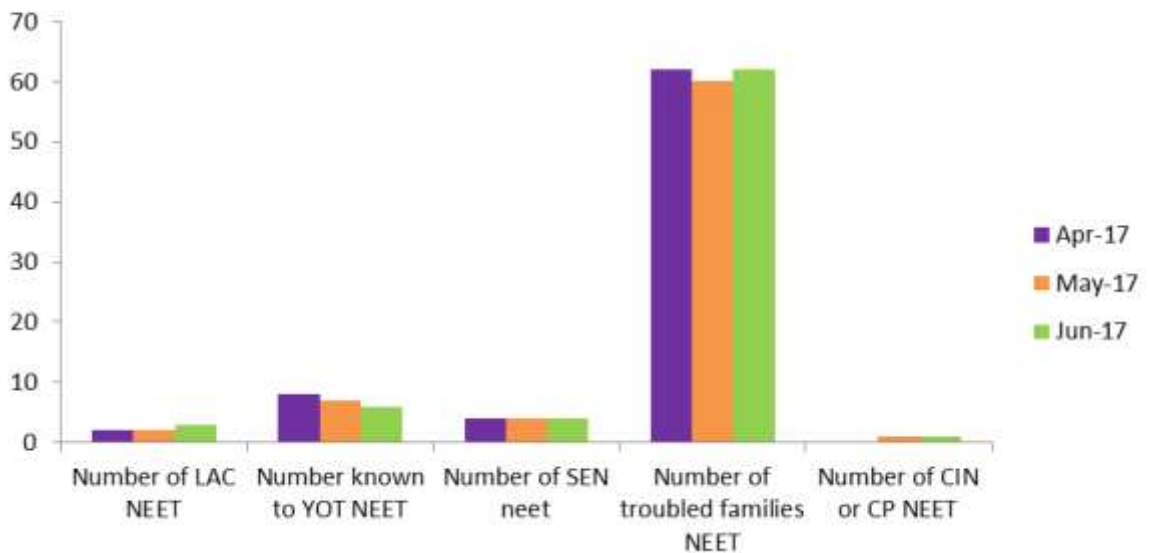
6.6.1 The Task Group considered the range of factors contributing to a young person being NEET in Medway and the wider determinants driving action across the Council and partners. The Task Group considered there was scope for the new Medway Skills Board to make real impact by undertaking a full and detailed analysis of barriers to employment for these young people with a view to prioritising effective interventions and identifying what else can be done.

Employment Opportunities for 18-25 Year Olds (including Apprenticeships)



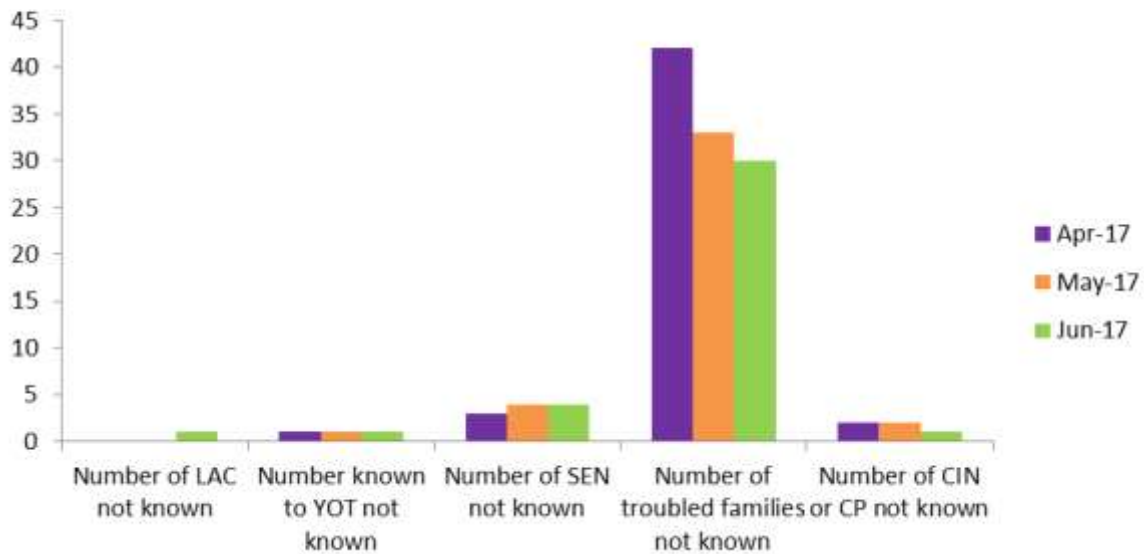
6.6.2 The graphs below indicates Medway’s vulnerable young people for quarter 1 2017 by month.

Number of Vulnerable young people aged 16-17 who are NEET



6.6.3 It is worth taking into consideration that as the number of children who are NEET decreases the number of children whose destination is not known increases, impacting the NEET figure.

Number of Vulnerable young people aged 16-17 who are Not Known



6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

The NEET rate for 18-25 year olds in Medway and the contributory factors.

- 1. The Cabinet is recommended to refer the report of the Task Group to the Skills Board and for the recommendations to be taken into account by the Board in developing the Skills agenda for Medway and associated priority actions.***
- 2. The Cabinet be recommended to ask the Skills Board to consider how the data collected by the Council on NEETS can be used more creatively to align the potential of these young people with available employment and training opportunities.***
- 3. The Cabinet be recommended to ask the Skills Board to consider the range of factors contributing to a young person being NEET in Medway and evaluate what else can be done in terms of early preventative interventions.***

6. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE COLLECTED AND FINDINGS

Section 2: To evaluate the Council's role as community leader in terms of a Medway Skills agenda working with partners locally and regionally to encourage the growth of the local job market and deliver outcomes around skills, training and employment for 18-25 year olds. (KLOE 2).

The Task Group met with Eileen Bishop, Employer and External Manager, Job Centre Plus (Chatham), Department for Work and Pensions, Martin Hall, Greenspaces and Skills Programme Manager, and Chris Hare, Executive Director for Enterprise and Employer Engagement, Mid Kent College, to take evidence for this key line of enquiry.

6.8 The big picture

- 6.8.1 Medway is one of the largest urban areas in the south east outside London and the biggest regeneration zone within the Thames Gateway. Supported by significant government funding, with the potential for a further £1 billion of private sector investment, Medway is recognised as an area of strategic development by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).
- 6.8.2 A major regeneration programme is transforming Medway's landscape bringing 30,000 new homes, many of them riverfront developments, and significant new employment space to the area. Today more than 13,700 businesses have their home in Medway which has a growing reputation as a hub for high tech engineering and creative businesses. New business growth rate outstrips both the national and south east averages creating great employment opportunities for local people.
- 6.8.3 Medway's location, just 34 minutes from London by train, close to all major travel networks and midway between the capital and continent, means the area is an ideal location for businesses and people looking for a place to live, work and enjoy.
- 6.8.4 Medway is also a centre of educational excellence with four universities, the largest further education (FE) provision in the county and a University Technical College, all offering a range of outstanding academic and vocational learning opportunities to equip learners with the skills they need to secure employment. Strong partnerships between education and business mean that courses are tailored to meet employment needs and businesses have access to first class research on their doorstep.
- 6.8.5 The Council's active focus on the broader skills agenda has resulted in a current Job Seekers' Allowance rate of 1.9 per cent, the same as the GB rate. At the time of the Dockyard closure, unemployment was over 20 per cent.
- 6.8.6 To support and meet the Council's objective of creating a strong diversified economy, the Council has initiated an officer and Member Skills Board. A significant area of focus is matching educational providers' offers with employers' requirements via the formation of a new Enterprise Zone Technology Park in

Employment Opportunities for 18-25 Year Olds (including Apprenticeships)

Rochester – Innovation Park Medway - utilising Local Growth Fund funding from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) to capture high gross value added jobs.

6.9 Business Growth

6.9.1 There has been a growth in the number of businesses in Medway from 2011 to 2016, with the majority being micro (0-9 employees). Business growth rate in Medway (30%) is higher than that of the South East (17.6%) and Great Britain (20.9%) over the same 5 year period. Construction businesses continue to dominate Medway's industry, but the biggest change in this 5 year period has come from the increase in Business Administration and Support Services. Job density is lower than the South East and Great Britain, meaning there are fewer jobs per person available. With Medway's population set to increase by 24% over the next 25 years more job opportunities will need to be provided to prevent unemployment levels from rising.

6.10 Employment and weekly earnings

6.10.1 The table below (based on 2015 figures) shows how in Medway the services sector (at 71,750 employees) is significantly larger than any other sector e.g. construction which stood at 5,000 employees. The second table breaks employment into major social groups and shows that in Medway the employment levels of manager and professional roles is 10% lower than that of the south east

INDUSTRY (2015 - PROVISIONAL)	MEDWAY		SOUTH EAST	GREAT BRITAIN
	EMPLOYEE JOBS	%	%	%
Primary Services (A-B: agriculture and mining)	200	0.2	1.0	1.0
Energy and Water (D-E)	1,400	1.6	1.0	1.1
Manufacturing (C)	7,000	8.1	6.2	8.2
Construction (F)	5,000	5.8	4.5	4.5
Services (G-S)	71,750	83.0	87.2	85.2
Wholesale and retail, including motor trades (G)	14,000	16.2	16.7	15.7
Transport storage (H)	4,500	5.2	4.4	4.6
Accommodation and food services (I)	6,000	6.9	7.3	7.2
Information and communication (J)	2,250	2.6	6.3	4.2
Financial and other business services (K-N)	13,000	15.1	21.5	22.3
Public admin, education and health (O-Q)	28,000	32.4	26.2	26.8
Other Services (R-S)	4,000	4.6	4.8	4.4

SOURCE: ONS Business Register and Employment Survey

NOTES: % is a proportion of total employee jobs

- Data excludes farm-based agriculture

Employment Opportunities for 18-25 Year Olds (including Apprenticeships)

EMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATION	MEDWAY		SOUTH EAST	GREAT BRITAIN
	EMPLOYEE JOBS	%	%	%
SOC 2010 MAJOR GROUPS 1-3	50,200	38.7%	48.5%	44.4%
1 Managers, directors and senior officials	13,300	10.2%	11.9%	10.4%
2 Professional occupations	20,700	16.0%	21.4%	19.9%
3 Associate professional & technical	16,200	12.5%	15.2%	14.1%
SOC 2010 MAJOR GROUP 4-5	33,800	26.0%	20.9%	21.1%
4 Administrative & secretarial	17,200	13.2%	11.0%	10.6%
5 Skilled trades occupations	16,600	12.8%	9.9%	10.5%
SOC 2010 MAJOR GROUP 6-7	22,800	17.6%	16.1%	16.8%
6 Caring, leisure & other service occupations	12,500	9.6%	8.9%	9.2%
7 Sales and customer service occupations	10,300	8.0%	7.2%	7.6%
SOC 2010 MAJOR GROUP 8-9	22,900	17.6%	14.1%	17.2%
8 Process plant & machine operatives	11,200	8.6%	5.0%	6.4%
9 Elementary occupations	11,700	9.0%	9.1%	10.8%
SOURCE: ONS Annual Population Survey				
NOTE: Numbers and % are for those aged 16+				
- % is a proportion of all persons in employment				

6.10.2 Weekly earnings of those working in Medway are lower than the weekly earnings of those living in Medway. This means that Medway residents may look to work outside of Medway in order to seek better wages and this could discourage people living outside of Medway coming here to work.

Workplace-based earnings

6.10.3 In 2015 median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees in Medway stood at £522, below the national (£540) and regional (£566) levels and remain slightly higher than the level for Kent (£518).

Residence-based earnings

6.10.4 Medway resident weekly earnings at £566 continue to stand above the national (£541) and the Kent (£553) level, but remain below the South East level (£582).

6.10.5 Resident earnings are significantly higher than work-place earnings in Medway, an indication of out-commuting, as residents travel to other areas for higher paid jobs.

Workplace – full-time weekly earnings (£s)							
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Change - %	
						2015/16	2012/16
Medway	488.0	489.2	504.5	504.9	522.2	3.4	7.0
Kent	490.8	481.5	489.8	503.4	517.5	2.8	5.4
South East	536.6	536.6	541.7	552.0	566.0	2.5	5.5
Great Britain	507.9	517.6	520.4	528.5	540.2	2.2	6.4

Employment Opportunities for 18-25 Year Olds (including Apprenticeships)

Resident – full-time weekly earnings (£s)							
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Change - %	
						2015/ 16	2012/ 16
Medway	527.2	539.3	548.6	547.9	566.1	3.3	7.4
Kent	538.9	538.6	541.7	551.5	553.3	0.3	2.7
South East	555.8	557.6	567.2	574.9	582.0	1.2	4.7
Great Britain	508.3	517.9	521.1	529.0	541.0	2.3	6.4

Source – Medway Council briefing Average Earnings 2016 (May 2017)

6.11 Evidence sessions

6.11.1 The Task Group met with representatives from Mid Kent College, the Department of Work and Pensions and also Council officers to discuss the following issues:

- Their role in supporting the economic regeneration of Medway
- How to ensure school leavers, graduates and apprentices have the skills Medway employers need?
- Their views on the emerging priorities for the Medway Skills Board

6.12 Key Findings

The importance of Maths and English

6.12.1 The Task Group was pleased to meet with Chris Hare, Executive Director for Enterprise and Employer Engagement, Mid Kent College which caters for about 4,500 16-18 year olds per year in full time education. In total the College trains about 11,500 people per year

6.12.2 We heard that the College are acutely aware that Maths and English skills are essential for the workplace and post 16 education. One of the requirements for Government funding is that those students who do not hold an A* to C in GCSE maths or English must as part of their study programme at college include teaching to support them to progress their skills in these subjects. About 75% of 16-18 year olds at Mid Kent College fell into this category. This was very challenging as the College only had a year to do this and was not helped by the fact that, naturally, the young people were keen to start their course and not have to study maths and English. However, this challenge was not uncommon across the country. The College believed that early engagement with schools to reinforce the importance of maths and English was key but recognised this was not easy. Both schools and young people needed to understand that maths and English were important in the world of work.

6.12.3 The Council's 16-19 Strategy recognises that Maths and English are central to work and life and the link between success in these subjects and better life chances. It is government policy to enable as many young people as possible to

Employment Opportunities for 18-25 Year Olds (including Apprenticeships)

improve their literacy and numeracy and to have the chance, if they have not already done so, to gain GCSE maths and English at a grade C or above. Young people with a Grade D are required to re-take the qualification.

6.12.4 The majority of employers (both large and small) use the GCSE qualification as the basis to make a judgement about a candidate.

6.12.5 Both at a national and local level, large numbers of young people leave school each year without good GCSE passes in maths and English. In 2013/14, 37% of learners nationally did not achieve grades A*-C in both English and maths but the figure in Medway was higher 41.5% in 2013/14.

Academic Year	% of Medway students gaining A*-C GCSE (with English and Maths)	% of Medway students gaining A*-C in English	% of Medway students gaining A*-C in Maths
2011-12	61.2%	65.2%	62.6%
2012-13	60.9%	70.2%	69.0%
2013-14	58.5%	69.0%	69.6%
2014-15	57.2%	72.3%	68.1%

Delivery of information, advice and guidance (IAG) in schools

6.12.6 The way careers guidance for young people is delivered has changed in recent years. Until 2012, it was the responsibility of local authorities and was delivered through the Connexions service. Since 2012 there has been a statutory duty (The Education Act 2011) on local authority maintained schools in England to secure access to independent, impartial careers guidance for their pupils in years 9–11. At the same time schools were released from the statutory duties to provide careers education and work-related learning. In 2013, the duty to provide careers guidance was extended to cover years 8–13. Many academies and all sixth-form and further education colleges are subject to similar requirements through their funding agreements. More recently, the Government has announced plans to publish a careers strategy, although this has not yet happened.

6.12.7 An Education Select Committee report⁴ in 2013 raised serious concerns about the quality of careers information, advice and guidance in schools. A follow up joint report⁵ of a House of Commons Sub Committee of the Business, Innovation and Skills and Education Committees in July 2016 found that the situation had not improved and provision in schools was patchy, still poor in many schools and with too many young people who had been failed for too long.

6.12.8 The Task Group noted that the evidence gathered for the 16-19 Strategy highlighted the need for better integration between Council economic development plans and education/skills plans, the need for collaborative whole system thinking

⁴ Careers guidance for young people: The impact of the new duty on schools

⁵ Careers education, information, advice and guidance

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and in particular the case made for the strategic importance of data in terms of use to inform careers IAG and sufficient post-16 provision linked to the needs of the labour market. The Case for Action in the 16-19 Strategy stated that Principals and Head Teachers in Medway have an appetite and wish to receive more labour market information and more insight into economic development plans

- 6.12.9 The Task Group was encouraged to hear that the Mid Kent College Principal was keen to actively engage with schools and sat on the Head teachers Group. The College was keen to support action to improve the work being done with parents and schools to raise awareness at an early stage and achieve parity between the advice and guidance given for both academic and vocational routes post 16.
- 6.12.10 The Task Group wrote to the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) with a view to acquiring a better understanding of the degree to which high quality and impartial careers guidance is being provided for 12 -18 year olds in Medway's secondary schools. In particular the Task Group was keen to establish whether non-academic routes are receiving "equal airtime" and to what extent our schools are collaborating with colleges, the UTC and other training providers to secure this.
- 6.12.11 Whilst there is no specific careers guidance judgement from OFSTED as part of its Common Inspection Framework, the Task Group was interested in obtaining an overview from the RSC of the state of play in secondary schools in Medway based on OFSTED judgements in relation to:
- Successful promotion and support for children's choices about the next stage of their education, employment or training, where relevant from impartial careers advice and guidance
 - Successful promotion and support for children's employability skills so that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment, self-employment or training and
 - The extent to which children attain relevant qualifications so that they can and do progress to the next stage of their education into courses that lead to higher-level qualifications and into jobs that meet local and national needs.
- 6.12.12 The Task Group was keen to establish what if any role the RSC has in working with schools to raise the quality and breadth of IAG in our schools and how the Council may collaborate on this and the skills agenda more generally, which is so key to employability. The RSC was invited to highlight any areas of best practice.
- 6.12.13 The Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) advised that his role does not currently make specific reference to responsibilities for the quality and breadth of Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), although colleagues in the Careers Unit and National Apprenticeship Service within the department have relevant responsibilities, which are set out below together with information about recent policy developments.

Careers strategy and National Apprenticeship Service

- 6.12.14 Careers guidance is central to social mobility, a key priority for the Secretary of State. To help ensure pupils are aware of all routes to higher skills and into the

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workplace, from January 2018 maintained schools and academies will be legally required to:

- give education and training providers of approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships the opportunity to talk to all pupils in years 8-13 about technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- publish a short policy statement on their website to set the framework for requests from providers.

6.12.15 The Department for Education is currently developing new statutory guidance which sets out their expectations of schools towards careers guidance and it is anticipated this will be published early in the New Year. The department is raising awareness amongst schools about the new requirements.

6.12.16 The National Apprenticeship Service (part of the Department for Education) supports schools in meeting their legal requirement of providing IAG. One way they do this is through the *Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge (ASK)* project which aims to support the Government's ambition of achieving 3 million apprenticeship starts by 2020. The project delivers a range of apprenticeship and traineeship IAG services to schools and other learning establishments. Amazing Apprenticeships (<https://resources.amazingapprenticeships.com/>), a school resource portal, is used as the central communications channel to keep schools informed.

6.12.14 The RSC advised that his office does not keep readily accessible information on Ofsted's findings on careers advice and guidance. However he did ask some Medway academy trusts for a summary of their approach to providing IAG. Examples of approaches to providing information, advice and guidance in Medway academies from Fort Pitt Thomas Aveling Academies and the Greenacre Academy Trust are set out below.

Fort Pitt Thomas Aveling Academies (FPTA)

6.12.15 FPTA use a range of activities to promote IAG in their academies including:

- inviting outside speakers to give talks to raise aspirations
- inviting organisations and companies such as local Chambers of Commerce and Rotary clubs to give interview experience through the Medway Enterprise Business partnership
- organising careers' evenings every two years for Year 10 pupils and upwards, involving major organisations including universities, financial companies, engineering firms and apprenticeship providers. Local colleges are also invited so that students see the full range of possibilities post-16.
- PSHE and citizenship lessons address employability skills and preparation for life post-16.
- students in Year 10 are mandated to take part in work experience. Students in Year 12 are encouraged to take part and allowed to source work experience of their choice. About 70% of the Year 12 take up the offer and participate in work experience.
- students are actively encouraged to explore all post-16 options including colleges and are supported in completing applications where required.

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- using Medway Youth Trust (MYT) to provide IAG in small groups and individual meetings.

Greenacre Academies Trust

6.12.16 Greenacre buys in IAG from Medway Youth Trust (MYT). MYT have an IAG package called Skills for Life aimed at all KS4 and KS5 students, which entails:

- opportunities for students to visit organisations and vice versa to find out more about routes into work.
- regular assemblies with visitors from the business world explaining their organisation, what their work entails and the direct routes into their line of work. The delivery depends on the audience and is adapted for primary and secondary school age. An example of this was when an Educational Psychologist had an open forum meeting with 6th form psychology students.
- work experience opportunities for students in Year 10 (fortnight) and sixth form (1 week).
- balanced offer of academic and vocational subjects at Key stage 4 and 5 with advice given to support students when they are making a choice about the pathway they need to take to achieve their career aims. This is presented in a series of assemblies and information evenings for parents and students.
- links with various organisations promoting apprenticeships, e.g. Delphi, BAE and Mercedes.
- a progression mentor is employed in the 6th form responsible for providing independent advice, guidance and support with pathways post sixth form, including support with UCAS applications.
- visits to businesses to learn about the world of work. A recent example was a group of aspiring software engineers who visited DoveTail Games (this was chosen following a student survey).
- Skills for Life surveys of students to find out students' aspirations. These are monitored to bring in expertise from the world of work to talk to and to mentor students.

Ofsted Common Inspection Framework

6.12.17 The House of Commons Sub Committee of the Business, Innovation and Skills and Education Select Committees welcomed an increased emphasis on careers provision from Ofsted but recommended that Ofsted introduce a specific judgment on careers information, advice and guidance for secondary schools, and set clear criteria for making these judgments. Further, the Common Inspection Framework should be amended to make clear that a secondary school whose careers provision is judged as “requires improvement” or “inadequate” cannot be judged to be “outstanding” overall; likewise, a secondary school should be unable to receive an overall judgment of “good” if its careers provision is judged to be “inadequate”. In its response the Government rejected this recommendation.

6.12.18 The Task Group felt that the Government should be requested to reconsider its position on this.

Employability

Mid Kent College

- 6.12.19 The Task Group heard that one of the main purposes of Mid Kent College was to improve the employability of young people.
- 6.12.20 In response to the skills deficits identified by the SELEP Skills Strategy, as part of the annual business planning process, the College assesses the priorities and local needs of Medway. Also a lot of work is being done by the College with employers and there is an annual skills survey of businesses. There is an Employer Panel which works with the College's curriculum leads to feed in the needs of businesses and inform the latter what was happening in the world of education as well as providing an opportunity to promote what the College was doing. The College had successfully bid for SELEP funds.
- 6.12.21 Students were expected to undertake work experience as part of their study programme to develop their employability skills. The college had just increased the work experience element of courses to 100 hours per year. Each student undertook one month work experience per year as a minimum. By 2020 this would increase to 3 months per year. The college believed this would result in students leaving with the right skills to become economically active.
- 6.12.22 Mid Kent College offers intermediate, advanced and higher apprenticeships from age 16 and upwards (there is no upper age limit) for those who want to earn while they learn. The College believe that it is important apprenticeships are seen as being of equal value compared to other qualifications and they are keen to raise the awareness and profile of apprenticeships so they are not seen as a last option.
- 6.12.23 The College has seen a significant increase in the number of adult apprenticeships (average age was around 30) as a result of the apprenticeship levy.

Department for Work and Pensions in Medway

- 6.12.24 Eileen Bishop, the Employer and External Relations Manager from Job Centre Plus (Chatham), Department for Work and Pensions also accepted an invitation from the Task Group to attend and give evidence. The Task Group reviewed the support provided by Job Centre Plus (as set out in detail in paragraph 4.8 of the section in this report called Setting the Context) which includes Jobcentre Plus support for young people in school, Work Coaches, Work Experience and volunteering, the Welfare to Work Programmes, The Youth Obligation and the New Enterprise Allowance.
- 6.12.25 The DWP recognise that many young people coming out of school were not as ready as they should be for work with little understanding of what was expected in the workplace. Many had mental health issues or were suffering from depression so the DWP were looking to invest in different ways to support people with health issues. There were now three disability employment advisers in the Chatham job centre (previously there had been one) whose full time role was to upskill the

work coaches to help support those young people who have a health condition. The DWP was looking to secure more provision to help those with mental health support needs. Kent County Council were looking to increase provision for local supported employment for those with physical disabilities. The DWP were trying to increase that provision nationally in different areas and piloting it for 18 months. The DWP had made funding available and nine local authorities had taken up the offer so far.

6.12.26 As well as a lack of hard skills, the Task Group heard that a lack of soft skills such as communications, team working, problem solving, self belief and self management was a real concern. Some young people had almost no knowledge about the world of work, what direction they wanted to take, what their current skills were or how get to where they wanted to go. The DWP were having to deal with issues of young people of 18/19 not understanding the world of work and as a result had decided to run workshops for them on etiquette at work.

6.12.27 There were three DWP schools advisors for Kent who were part of a programme that had been running for about 8 months but only 3 schools in Medway had so far taken up the offer for an advisor to visit them and the DWP were keen to progress this. The DWP had increased provision for support for this programme and this may be increased further.

6.12.28 Job centres ran short courses directly with employers aimed at getting people into work. There were various programmes the DWP could apply for funding for.

Skills Programme Manager for Medway

6.12.29 The Task Group welcomed the designation of Martin Hall as the Skills Programme Manager for Medway with a clear focus on the skills agenda. He represented the Council on the SELEP Skills Advisory Group and also sat on the Kent and Medway Skills Commission. He looked after the Employ Medway Advice Centre and the Medway Apprenticeship Scheme (an external scheme which provided support and advice to businesses). The Task Group was advised that in the longer term the Council was looking to establish a dedicated Skills Officer in recognition of the strong links between social and economic regeneration and skills. Moving people from Level 2 to 3 had a significant impact on their social mobility and health and well being as well as having many positive benefits for the authority. The Skills agenda would underpin the Council's economic, regeneration and growth ambitions.

6.12.30 The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) is currently consulting on the SE LEPs Skills Strategy, a document to be used to support lobbying, funding and conveying the importance of skills in the LEP area. The document shows that across the LEP area apprenticeship starts have remained static (at 32,000) and the area has seen nearly 370,000 job vacancies over the last 12 months. The SELEP area has seen qualifications failing to keep pace with the national average and FE participation falling. It predicts that the future skills challenge will have to be met largely by upskilling adults.

Graduate Retention

- 6.12.31 With four Universities and a University Technical College in Medway, the Task Group considered there was significant scope for more to be done to attract people studying here to stay and take up jobs once they have completed their course. Equally Medway young people going into higher education away from the area should be encouraged to stay connected with a view to returning to work here. More could be done to offer work experience and internships for university students whilst studying and afterwards across employers in Medway.
- 6.12.32 Section 6 (3) of this report deals with the role of the Council as an employer in relation to employment opportunities for 18-25 year olds with a suggestion from the Task Group that Medway should be part of the LGA National Graduate Development Programme and also looking to develop a local public sector specialist graduate scheme, sharing candidates and training provision with other employers in the area.

The Medway Skills Board

- 6.12.33 The Medway Skills Board is a recent development which aims to provide a comprehensive, joined up approach to driving up the skills of communities in Medway and, by doing so, support the area's economic growth and physical and social regeneration. The Board will support the ongoing work to reduce NEETS figures, co-ordinate the delivery of the 16-19 Strategy, engender close working with schools, academies and colleges to address skills barriers to employment and work with partners to both influence and lobby for improvements in how parents, carers and young people access information on vocational apprenticeships and drive forward improvements in soft skills.
- 6.12.34 In terms of what the emerging priorities for a Medway Skills Board should be, Mid Kent College were keen to part of the Board to strengthen its capacity to engage businesses with the high level skills agenda and contribute towards keeping young people in the area.
- 6.12.35 The Task Group heard that the Skills Board could help address the need to raise aspirations, particularly as the skills base in Medway is much lower than the national average. The Skills Board would also make a real difference in moving the Council's regeneration plans agenda forward.

6.13 RECOMMENDATIONS

Supporting the economic regeneration of Medway

4. ***That the Cabinet be commended for its plan to establish a Medway Skills Board and recommended to prioritise employment opportunities for young people in developing the Skills Agenda; recognising that whilst 16-17 year olds are firmly on the radar, support and opportunities for 18-25 year olds should be strengthened, many of whom may be later learners or seeking employment after a break from education and training.***
5. ***The Cabinet be recommended to invite representatives of Medway Head teachers from each type of school to sit on the Skills Board.***

How to ensure school leavers, graduates and apprentices have the skills Medway employers need?

6. ***The Cabinet be recommended to prioritise development of a strategic employer engagement approach to effectively broker work placements and apprenticeships as feedback from employers in Medway is that smaller businesses do not have the capacity to deal with multiple requests.***
7. ***The Cabinet be recommended to request the Skills Board to gain a better understanding of the degree to which high quality and impartial careers guidance is being provided for 12-18 year olds in Medway, in particular to understand the extent to which non-academic routes are receiving “equal treatment” and also how schools are collaborating with colleges, the UTC and other training providers to secure this.***
8. ***The Cabinet be recommended to ask the Skills Board to review OFSTED judgements under the Common Assessment Framework across Medway’s secondary schools of how successfully young people’s employability choices are being promoted and supported so that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment, self-employment or training.***
9. ***The Cabinet be recommended to write to the Secretary of State for Education to seek a reversal of the Government’s decision to reject the recommendation of the House of Commons Sub Committee on Education, Skills and the Economy that a specific careers guidance judgement be included as part of the Ofsted Common Inspection Framework.***
10. ***The Cabinet be recommended to encourage schools to access the Job Centre Plus support for schools scheme to schools (intended to assist schools to deliver their statutory duty to provide high quality, independent and impartial careers advice to pupils aged from 12/13 up to 17/18) through available channels, e.g. Head teachers forum, Schools’ Newsletter***
11. ***The Cabinet be recommended to request the Early Help and Targeted Services Team to explore how to work further with community and voluntary organisations to raise awareness amongst parents of the range of IAG services available and the opportunities for young people.***

The emerging priorities for the Medway Skills Board

- 12. *The Cabinet be recommended, in conjunction with partners, to review the objectives of the 16-19 Strategy with a view to embedding the Strategy's learning, actions and outcomes in the emerging Skills Agenda for Medway.***
- 13. *The Cabinet be recommended to request the Medway Skills Board to work with partners to develop a more flexible approach to apprenticeships across Medway by ensuring that further training and employment opportunities are investigated where a placement comes to an end without an offer of employment.***
- 14. *The Skills Board be recommended that graduate retention should be a priority work stream for the Board with a view to encouraging both graduates who leave Medway to study to return to Medway and also non Medway students studying in Medway to stay in the area.***
- 15. *The Cabinet be recommended to send a copy of the Task Group's report to all head teachers of secondary schools in Medway for their information and also request that the report be considered at a meeting of the Medway Secondary Headteachers' Association.***

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6. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE COLLECTED AND FINDINGS

Section 3: To evaluate the Council's performance as an employer - 'leading by example' (KLOE 3)

The Task Group met with Carrie Mckenzie, the Council's Chief People Officer, Joanne Budd, Organisational Change Consultant and Angela Rowe, Business Development Manager to take evidence for this key line of enquiry.

Also in attendance were four Council employees who had taken up apprenticeships with the Council; Simon, Recruitment Consultant, Business Development (MCG), Sam, Executive Support Apprentice, Children and adult Services, Alex, Recruitment Consultant, Business Development (Ocelot) and Amber, Housing Apprentice, Housing Management.

6.14 The Council's Apprenticeship Scheme

6.14.1 The Task Group heard that there are 278 18-25 year olds employed by the Council across the four directorates: Regeneration, Community, Environment and Transport (RCET) (160), Children and Adults (89), Business Support (25), Public Health (4). There are currently 32 apprentices at the Council: Business Support (7), RCET (12), Public Health (1), Children and Adults (12). Most are aged 19-21.

6.14.2 Around 90% of apprentices with the Council end up securing permanent employment.

6.14.3 Apprentices benefit from an Apprenticeship Academy which provides regular updates on training/employment opportunities, NUS Apprentice membership card, discounted access to leisure/retail services and access to CV writing and employability workshop courses at Employ Medway and other providers.

6.14.4 The Apprentices Pathway to Develop Programme launched in October 2017 provides apprentices with access to seven half-day workshops on a number of life skills topics, including motivation, social isolation, evaluation skills, physical wellbeing and healthy eating etc.

6.15 Advertising apprenticeships

6.15.1 All apprenticeship vacancies are advertised online, through the Council and other organisations' websites as well as being advertised through recruitment fayres in London, Kent and at local universities, as well as through MidKent College.

6.15.2 Not all apprentices come from Medway – several are from Maidstone and other areas in Kent.

6.16 Applications and response rate

6.16.1 Disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria for an apprenticeship vacancy are automatically offered an interview under the 'Two Ticks' standard. The Council

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also aims to support disabled staff within the workplace by making reasonable adjustments.

6.16.2 The gender response rate for roles is fairly evenly split and it is not the case that there are more female applicants applying for office-based roles. The Council receives on average 20-25 applications for each apprenticeship vacancy, but response rates can vary depending on the role, level of apprenticeship etc. The quality of applications is generally very high and it is very rare that an apprenticeship vacancy has to be re-advertised.

6.17 Apprenticeship Levels/Types and Provision

6.17.1 The Council offers apprenticeships from Levels 2-3 (Intermediate/A-Level standard) upwards and also offers a limited number of Level 4-6 apprenticeships, mainly in HR and Finance, but these are largely used to upskill existing staff rather than offered to new candidates. Most apprenticeships are office based with very few being out of doors. More manual-focused apprenticeships are offered by Medway Norse.

6.17.2 The majority of apprenticeships in Children and Adult Services are administrative and there are no apprenticeships in highly trained roles such as social work – these are aimed more at graduate candidates.

6.17.3 The learning/education element of apprenticeships is provided by a number of different providers across Medway/Kent. The Council purchases learning services from these providers using funding drawn down from the Apprenticeship Levy (to which the Council contributes £500K/year).

6.18 Programme Design and Completion rate

6.18.1 An apprenticeship consists of a technical certificate, role-specific qualifications in English/Maths/ICT and an NVQ. A Level 2 apprenticeship lasts 12-18 months, a Level 3 apprenticeship 18-24 months. Around 90% of apprentices complete their placements.

6.18.2 Candidates who are offered apprenticeships usually have good levels of numeracy/literacy. Maths/English teaching on apprenticeship courses focuses on practical application of these skills e.g. managing budgets, reading contracts etc.

6.19 Retention rates

6.19.1 Around 90% of apprentices find work at the Council after their apprenticeship placement ends, which is higher than average. 15% of apprentices go back onto the job market or do not complete their apprenticeship.

6.20 Medway's Apprenticeship Academy

6.20.1 This launched in October 2017 and no other local authority currently operates a similar scheme. All content is bespoke to Medway. Working with partner Higher Education Institutions, the aim is to provide excellent quality apprenticeship qualifications as an alternative route into further education and/or employment.

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Apprenticeship qualifications are open to any age group and can also be offered to existing employees to support their continuing professional development.

6.20.2 Apprentices are given a guarantee that their apprenticeship qualifications will be regularly monitored and quality assured with the respective training providers. In addition they are offered additional support and development opportunities to enhance their personal and professional progression.

6.21 Links with schools

6.21.1 The Council liaises with maintained schools which employ apprentices, but there are no other links with schools.

6.22 Medway Norse/Medway Commercial Group

6.22.1 Medway Norse and Medway Commercial Group run their own well-regarded apprenticeship schemes. The Council offers HR support and guidance where needed. Medway Norse contributes to the Apprenticeship Levy and is a training provider for their own apprentices.

6.22.2 Contractors supplying Council with services over the value of £1m are contractually required to take on apprentices.

6.22.3 There is the potential for the Council to work with Medway Norse and other big providers in the future to roll out the Apprenticeship Academy.

6.23 Disability Confident Scheme

6.23.1 The Task Group was interested to learn about the Disability Confident Scheme, which the Council has signed up to. The aim, of the scheme is to make the most of the talents disabled people can bring to the workplace. DWP guidance states that through Disability Confident, thousands of employers are now challenging attitudes towards disability, increasing understanding of disability, removing barriers to disabled people and those with long-term health conditions. The scheme is designed with a view to ensuring disabled people have the opportunities to fulfil their potential and realise their aspirations. The scheme has three levels; Level 1, Disability Confident Committed, Level 2, Disability Confident Employer, Level 3, Disability Confident Leader and Level 4, Disability Confident Activities.

6.23.2 The Task Group considered that Medway Council should seek to ensure any organisations it enters into a contract with is signed up to Disability Confident Scheme.

6.24 Graduate retention

6.24.1 Historically graduate retention has been a problem for the Council. Temporary/Summer job opportunities for new graduates provide an opportunity for graduates to experience the real world of work, gain practical knowledge and experience.

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6.24.2 From May 2017 graduates have been able to undertake apprenticeships as long as it can be shown that they will acquire new skills. Graduates are not permitted to take on an apprenticeship linked to the subject area of their undergraduate degree.

6.24.3 The Council does not currently participate in the National Graduate Development Programme. Ideally the Council would be part of a local public sector specialist graduate scheme, sharing candidates and training provision with other employers in the area such as MCH, Foundation Trust, Clinical Commissioning Group – such an approach would fit with the transformation agenda for Medway the place, which needs a skilled and agile workforce.

6.25 Pre-employment/employability support

6.25.1 The Council works with Jobcentre Plus to run pre-employment courses. For example, one recent, NHS-funded course took hard-to-reach vulnerable children and young people and working with the Prince's Trust provided them with a month's training at Mid Kent College and they were then found placements across health and social care settings. 60% of participants secured employment following the course.

6.25.2 The Council works pro-actively with applicants who do not manage to secure employment following participation in pre-employment courses to ensure they are made aware of relevant training/employment opportunities. Support to applicants to improve their CV writing and interview skills is also provided.

6.26 Work experience

6.26.1 The Council offers standard two-week work experience placements to GCSE-level pupils from local schools. Every effort is made to ensure work experience placements at the Council give pupils a genuine experience of working in a public sector environment.

6.27 University of Kent Employability Points Scheme

6.27.1 The Council supports the University of Kent's Employability Points Scheme which rewards students for their involvement in co-curricular activities whilst studying at the University of Kent. Students can claim 'Employability Points' for each activity completed and towards the end of each academic year, students can redeem their points for the chance to apply for rewards. These rewards include paid internships, project placements, work experience, training, vouchers and much more, offered by businesses and organisations.

6.27.2 Through taking part in the scheme and working closely with the University the Council can gain access to highly skilled students whilst creating valuable work experience opportunities and potential future employment. Last year the Council successfully offered 34 opportunities to students in the form of internships, project and work experience placements.

6.28 The experience of Medway apprentices

6.28.1 The experiences shared with the Task Group by four current and former Medway Council apprentices are summarised below:

Sam, Executive Support Apprentice – Sam attended Bradfields Academy in Chatham and stayed post-16 for a year before leaving to study Animal Care at Mid Kent College for three years. Sometime into the course, Sam was advised that he would not be able to progress to a Level 3 qualification in Animal Care so he decided to leave. Sam initially heard about apprenticeships at school when he took part in the young commissioners programme. He also monitored the Council’s website for apprenticeship vacancies. Sam successfully applied for a vacancy in Public Health, starting his placement at the Council in 2015. Sam says that six months after starting the placement, his employer decided he wasn’t capable of meeting the job description for the role he was in, and so the apprenticeship would come to an end. Sam felt this was a very negative experience. Fortunately, a colleague in another department provided him with an alternative placement in Children and Adult Services. Sam says his experience of the apprenticeship scheme at Medway Council has been really interesting and he has had the opportunity to learn a lot about the roles of Executive and Personal Assistant. He has just completed a Business Administration Level 2 qualification, and his current employer has extended his contract for a further two years and will support his progress to a Level 3 qualification.

Amber, Housing Apprentice – Amber pursued an apprenticeship in hairdressing for two years after leaving school at 16. Following completion of her hairdressing apprenticeship she found it difficult to make a living as a self-employed hairdresser and so started to look into alternative careers. Amber wanted to work in a role where she felt she could help people. She was also inspired by her mother who works in the care sector. Amber found her current role on Jobs Go Public. Amber works as a Housing Apprentice, supporting tenants to manage their budgets, rent arrears and other issues. Since starting her role she has completed a number of professional development courses and has taken part in several A Better Medway Championships. Her employer has extended her placement for another 6 months, and she is hoping to find a job with the Council after her apprenticeship finishes.

Simon, Recruitment Consultant (MCG) – Simon left his school in Gravesend at 17 having completed the first year of Sixth Form. Simon worked in retail for several years, but didn’t see any opportunities for progression so decided to apply for apprenticeships in the Public Sector. He secured an apprenticeship placement in HR at Medway Council which lasted for about 12 months, and after working in various other positions he was offered a fulltime job as a recruitment consultant working for Medway Commercial Group. Since starting his new role he has successfully completed a qualification with the CIPD.

Alex, Recruitment Consultant (Ocelot) – Alex attended Chatham Boys and left after Year 13. School provided limited careers advice for students wishing to pursue vocational courses. Alex saw apprenticeships advertised on the Medway Council website and applied for a number of positions both at the Council and elsewhere. He really enjoyed his placement and is now working as a Recruitment Consultant at Medway Commercial Group and would like to develop his career in HR.

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- 6.28.1 In talking to apprentices it emerged that the balance between studying and working during a placement can vary depending on the workplace/team. Examples were given of supportive managers in HR which allowed apprentices to take time away from their roles to study and also participate in training around ICT and equalities.
- 6.28.2 The Task Group heard from one apprentice that her apprenticeship placement had allowed her to develop financial planning skills that would help her when she was ready to live by herself.
- 6.28.3 All the apprentices said that they had benefited from the life skills academy which is part of the apprenticeship scheme. This had allowed them to learn about mortgages and financial planning, topics and skills which were not necessarily covered in school.
- 6.28.4 When asked how helpful/encouraging their schools had been in communicating and supporting them to take up vocational options, some apprentices said that their colleges/schools had provided very little career advice or support. One young person told the Task Group that his school had encouraged him to pursue a course at university, but withdrew that support when he decided to apply for apprenticeships in central and local government.
- 6.28.5 One said that when he was at school Connexions was his career advice service, but that they tended to steer students towards university or lower-skilled vocational options like fruit picking, and neglected to mention apprenticeships or higher-skilled vocational roles. Another said that his school made it feel like the only options were university or MidKent College and there had been no mention of apprenticeships.
- 6.28.6 Some commented that many of their friends graduating from university now were struggling to find even basic jobs, whereas they felt they were in a strong position having built up significant on-the-job experience as part of their placements, as well as having been sponsored to gain qualifications.
- 6.28.7 One conclusion the Task Group drew from this was that a discussion with schools is needed to get a better understanding of what they are doing to deliver effective information, advice and guidance to students who wanted to pursue vocational options.
- 6.28.8 The Task Group are aware that many of the bigger employers in Medway (e.g. Natwest. NHS Foundation Trust) had well-run, highly regarded apprenticeship schemes, but that more needed to be done to encourage SMEs to offer apprenticeship placements.
- 6.28.9 The Task Group also agreed that more work could be done locally to develop a more flexible approach to apprentices across Medway by ensuring that further training and employment opportunities are investigated where a placement comes to an end without an offer of employment. This is reflected in the recommendations under key line of enquiry 2 in section 6 (2) of this report.

6.29 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 16. That the Council should become a member of the Local Government Association's National Graduate Development Programme, which is a two year graduate management development programme.**
- 17. That the Council works with its partners to develop a local public sector graduate scheme to allow high-quality candidates to develop experience in a number of organisations across health, local government and education.**
- 18. That the Cabinet be recommended to review support made available for 18-25 years olds to access Council employment opportunities, and the quality of work experience placement opportunities with the Council (with a view to achieving the national quality standard accreditation).**
- 19. The Cabinet be recommended to**
 - a) agree in principle that:**
 - i) businesses contracting with the Council above a specified threshold must be signed up to the Disability Confident Scheme,**
 - ii) businesses bidding for contracts below the agreed threshold be required to confirm whether they are Disability Confident and that this information be used by the Council for monitoring purposes, and;**
 - b) request the Chief Legal Officer to report back to Cabinet with options and a recommended threshold.**

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6. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE COLLECTED AND FINDINGS

Section 4: To consider action required to address the particular needs of vulnerable young people including looked after children and those with disabilities in the 18-25 age range (KLOE 4)

The Task Group met with Keith Clear, Medway Parent and Carer's Forum, Gemma Cooper, Skillnet, Martin Hall, Greenspaces and Skills Programme Manager, Liz Halton, Assistant Principal, Bradfields Academy, Julie Taylor, Educational Psychologist, Dave Waters, Vice Principal of Bradfield Academy and Andy Willetts, Head of Service – Early Help and Targeted Services to take evidence for this key line of enquiry.

Also in attendance were Carly, Summer and Toni from the Young People's Disability Group.

The framework already in place to secure the best possible outcomes for Medway's Looked After Children and children and young people with SEND is set out in Medway Council's Looked After Children Strategy 2015-2018 and the Council's SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2016 - 2020.

6.30 Medway Council's Looked After Children Strategy 2015-2018

- 6.30.1 This strategy sets out how Medway Council will fulfil its role as a Corporate Parent and provide good and effective parenting to children in care and care leavers, which helps them to develop permanent and caring relationships, achieve their potential and improve their outcomes
- 6.30.2 One of the eight objectives in the Strategy is to ensure that looked after children and young people achieve their full potential and can access suitable education, employment or training.
- 6.30.3 The Strategy states that Children in Care are amongst the most vulnerable in our society and are at risk of achieving poor outcomes and failing to meet their potential. The Council's aim is to narrow the gap between children and young people in care and all children in educational achievement, health outcomes, criminal behaviours, and employability.
- 6.30.4 A Virtual Head Teacher (VHT) and a Board of Governors is in place to support the Medway Virtual School. Their role is to champion the attainment of young people and the provision of high quality support according to assessed needs. All Medway schools have a Designated Teacher responsible for meeting the needs of looked after young people in their school and the VHT has established excellent links with every Designated Teacher.
- 6.30.5 The Strategy sets out a range of actions to support the educational attainment of looked after young people as follows:

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- Provide additional tuition to support attainment where required and identified in the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP), fully utilising the Pupil Premium.
- Ensure the right educational setting is chosen for each young person, according to their individual assessed needs maintaining as far as possible the child's current school placement. Ensure young people are placed in schools rated by Ofsted as good or better depending on their assessed needs and in accordance with the recommendation of the VHT. Where the grade of a school changes record on file whether the VHT recommends a change of school or not, and how the young person can be supported to achieve at that school. 84% of post 16 LAC were placed in good or outstanding education provisions.
- Promote joint working between all schools, colleges and academies in Medway and ensure each child has clear and realistic progress targets. Foster carers will be supported to create a suitable environment to learn and to engage proactively with schools to secure the young person's attainment.
- Ensure that looked after young people and care leavers are supported to achieve their full potential at any age and that they maintain comparable results and progress to their non-looked after peers. Each young person aged 16-18 will have a PEP regardless of their educational setting and we will continue with our engagement with the Care2Work scheme to increase internal and external apprenticeships, traineeship and work opportunities for young people. As at the end of June 2017 the percentage of PEPs reviews completed within 6 months of coming to care for post 16 young people was 85.5%.
- Ensure all children in care are supported to set up savings accounts, including those in externally commissioning placements.

6.31 Medway Council's SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2016 -2020

6.31.1 The Council's priorities for assessment and provision for children and young people with SEND are set out in The Medway SEND and Inclusion Strategy for 2015-2018.

6.31.2 The legislative background is set out in The Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice July 2015. The Act makes provision for:

- Children and young people with SEND to have the right to be educated in mainstream education with their peers;
- Children and young people to be at the heart of the system;
- Close cooperation between all the services that support children, young people and their families through the joint planning and commissioning of services;

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- Early identification of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities;
- A clear and easy to understand 'local offer' of education, health and social care services to support children and young people with SEND and their families;
- Children with more complex needs, for whom a co-ordinated assessment of needs and an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP) to remain in place until the age of 25;
- A clear focus on outcomes for children and young people with EHCPs, anticipating the education, health and care support they will need and planning for a clear pathway through education into adulthood, including opportunities for paid employment, independent living and participating in their community;
- Increased choice for parents and young people including a greater range of specialist educational provision, mainstream schools and colleges for which they can express a preference and the offer of a personal budget for those with an EHCPs in mainstream provision.

6.32 What the Strategy says about Education and Training for SEND Young People

6.32.1 Local authorities must ensure education or training provision for young people with special educational needs to the age of 18.

6.32.2 Local authorities must also ensure education or training provision for assessed young adults with SEND to the age of 25 to either enable them time to complete the outcomes detailed in their EHCPs and/or provide them with skills to access employment and independent living (supported as required). However, there is no statutory duty to continue in education beyond the age of 18.

6.32.3 Medway currently maintains 419 Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) for Post 16 pupils. Over the next 5 years, and based on current SEN records, the Post 16 cohort is likely to increase from 394 (2018-19) to 468 (2020-21).

6.32.4 At Post 16, young adults with assessed SEND can request a placement at a special school to age 19. This is usually a continuation of their current school placement. Alternatively, they can transfer to a mainstream further education college, independent specialist college (known as an independent service provider - ISP) or a DFE registered 19-25 provision. Medway and Kent have no local ISPs. Therefore, if the local authority agrees to fund a place at an ISP, it is invariably on a boarding basis.

6.32.5 Young people are also able to opt for work based training or an apprenticeship.

6.32.6 Medway SEN, together with the 0-25 Disability Team, who have responsibility for funding the social care aspect of a placement in an ISP, have drawn up guidelines for the placement of Post 16/19 young people in further education colleges and ISPs.

6.32.7 The Council works with Mid Kent College to ensure appropriate courses and support for young people with SEND and have also worked in collaboration with a local special school, Rivermead, to create 40 places at Mid Kent College as a year long introduction to the mainstream college for pupils with ASD and associated anxieties and vulnerabilities. These places have proved to be both successful and very popular.

6.32.8 The Strategy includes the following three key strategic priorities with associated actions relevant to the work of this Task Group:

Key Strategic Priorities

- With our partners, we will ensure a smooth education pathway from childhood to adulthood for children and young people with SEND.
- We will ensure that children and young people with SEND are provided with opportunities to develop resilience and learn to be as independent as possible, as they transition to adulthood.
- We will expect all providers to ensure high quality educational provision, particularly in mainstream schools and further education colleges, for all children and young people with SEND.

Associated Actions

- Create a fully integrated SEN/0-25 Disability Team to ensure effective planning for young people with SEND at transition stages.
- Plan and deliver effective pathways for Medway children and young people with assessed SEND, including those who are leaving care.
- Extend the support of the Medway Physical and Sensory Service Advisory Teachers for hearing impairment, visual impairment and physical disability to Mid Kent College.
- Work with commissioned independent services to source internships, work based training opportunities and supported work opportunities in local businesses for young people with SEND.
- For key stage 5 and post-16:
 - work with commissioned and partner agencies, ensure that there are opportunities for local education or training, including independence, and work experience and
 - ensure that young people and their parents are provided with detailed information about local opportunities at Key Stage 4-5 transition.

6.33 Early Help and Targeted Support

6.33.1 The Youth Service, Youth Offending Team and Information, Advice and Guidance all now come under the Head of Service – Early Help and Targeted Support with a focus on early intervention.

6.33.2 The Head of Service emphasised that, given the reduced resources of the Council, it is important services are not duplicated and the Council works closely with the Medway Youth Trust, Mid Kent College, schools and other organisations who have responsibility for delivering employment opportunities for young people. Medway's resources are focused on:

- looked after children,
- those known through the Youth Offending Team and
- those with SEN.

6.33.2 The Council employs four 4 specialist advisors for these groups (2 for SEN, 1 for LAC and 1 for YOT). However, this is a very complex and difficult cohort and some young people might well be known to all three advisors. The Task Group was encouraged to learn that every effort is being made to get IAG support and resources right for this small but significant group which should generate a reduction in NEET rates.

6.34 Skillnet

6.34.1 Gemma Cooper and Julie Taylor explained to the Task Group that the Skillnet Group has secured a contract with Medway Council to create eight internships starting in September 2017, rising to twelve in September 2018 and sixteen in September 2019. Skillnet expect to continue with a minimum sixteen places from September 2020 and have set the goal of achieving high quality, sustained paid work for 50% of interns during or shortly after the programme. Skillnet consider this to be an ambitious but achievable goal in the current jobs market.

6.34.2 Skillnet helps young people (16-25) with disabilities or autism to find employment. The Medway programme started in September 2017 with 8 students but demand for the programme is very high. Skillnet speak to employers to try to persuade them that young people with SEND can be a good match for the jobs they are recruiting for and to try and persuade them to look beyond the lack of qualifications and/or find a creative solution - such as employing two people for one job where one was an 80% match and the other a 20% match. The attitude of most employers is very positive and Skillnet find they wanted to help.

6.35 Bradfields Academy

6.35.1 Bradfields Academy is a specialist SEND provision which provides education for students with complex learning disabilities and difficulties including speech, language, emotional, sensory, physical and autistic spectrum disabilities. There are 308 pupils on the roll from primary to Y14 with approximately 90 at Key Stage 5.

6.35.2 In terms of information and advice given to older pupils who may be going into employment, the Academy considered this to be good but there was always room

for improvement. The Academy was at the start of a process of focusing on getting more young people into employment. This was a change from the past where the focus had been more on entry into college, largely due to a perception that the young people would not be able to secure employment. The Academy felt that some of the barriers were parents not believing their children could hold down a job and also general stereotypes about young people SEND. 8 young people who had left the Academy in the summer were currently on a supported internship programme with Skillnet.

- 6.35.3 Until recently, there had been a Connexions adviser who would be present at a student's annual review meeting with parents where a plan on moving on from the school to college would be agreed. Following changes to the Connexions contract the school now employed an advisor to provide this service. The advisor was fully independent and not constrained by budgets and could now offer more options in terms of providers to parents.
- 6.35.4 As well as this annual review, each pupil, as part of the curriculum in Year 13, was expected to undertake work experience one day per term, increasing to one day per week for the whole of Year 4. The Task Group heard that it could be difficult to find employers and sometimes placements would break down, although this was not always the fault of the student. None of the placements had been in manufacturing although catering was common. The school surveyed students on what placements they wanted but it was often difficult to match this with available employers and this could be frustrating and disheartening for the young people. Feedback from employers about placements had been positive on the whole and the school found that employers usually came to realise the excellent work ethic demonstrated by the vast majority of their students (something rarely seen in mainstream secondary school students).

6.36 Medway Parent and Carers Forum

- 6.36.1 The Forum is not a support group but rather acts as a voice for parents, families and carers of children and young people with disabilities and additional needs. The Forum represents the views of parents, carers and their families and works with a variety of local bodies including the NHS and Medway Council to improve outcomes.
- 6.36.2 Forum Members had asked that the following issues be highlighted with the Task Group:
- The importance of young people with disabilities and additional needs being given more opportunities in the work place, i.e. access to public facing roles and not limited to certain tasks.
 - The need for young people to be able to choose from a wider variety of employers and not just the "usual suspects" i.e. charity shops, garden centres etc.
 - Many young people could travel independently to work but those with a bus pass could not use this until after 9 am. Perhaps employers needed to show more flexibility on start times. For those without a bus pass the public transport system in Medway meant that some had to catch two buses involving more than one bus company, with the consequent need to buy two bus tickets to get

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to work. If a similar system to the Oyster Card could be introduced in Medway that would be very helpful.

- The ability to access a support worker via the Work Fund during employment was a concern. Young people with learning disabilities often needed such support at work to help them remain focused.

6.36.3 The Forum believe that larger employers could employ more apprentices. East Kent Hospital Trust had successfully offered work opportunities to young people with SEND and some had been successful in securing permanent employment, although it was not clear if this programme was still running. Many young people with SEND may not have the strongest academic skills but as individuals could be very loyal and passionate about their work. It was important to educate employers to focus on what young people were able to do rather than what they could not do.

6.37 Young People's Disability Group

6.37.1 The experiences shared with the Task Group by three members of the Young People's Disability Group are summarised below:

Carly had attended Bradfields Academy and her work experience had been at a nursery. She was now at an adult education centre studying maths and English. Carly had found it hard to find a job and was often told she did not have the skills needed. This was a real difficulty for people with learning disabilities. For example to study for a childcare qualification she needed Level 1 maths and English but was told she could not apply for that.

Summer had attended Bradfields Academy which she found good from an educational perspective but poor for her mental and physical health. She had gone on to Mid Kent College but during her time there her mental health had deteriorated. She hoped to start work on a farm in the Sevenoaks area where young people with special needs were helped and there was a possibility of finding full time employment. Summer was now attending this placement and enjoying it.

Toni had attended an SEN school (Rivermead) as this was the only school with wheelchair access. Toni did not have special needs but had been placed on the special needs curriculum even though she had been promised a place in the mainstream stream. Toni had attended Mid Kent College and then moved to North Kent College where she was studying Level 3 Accounting. Toni had experienced being bullied by students who had attended her secondary school. She felt the support available to her at Mid Kent College could have been better and she highlighted that long (3 hour) breaks in the timetable were unhelpful. Toni had been trying to find part time work for two years without success and last month had applied for 30 jobs and had received no replies. She thought this might be due to being in a wheel chair and employers not having accessible workplaces.

Toni felt people with disabilities should be involved in educating employers.

She had found the Young People's Disability Group to be a good source of help and advice when applying for jobs and writing CVs.

6.38 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 20. *The Cabinet be recommended to ask the Skills Board to consider how best to further promote the particular attributes and qualities that SEND students can offer to employers.***
- 21. *The Cabinet, via the Skills Board, be recommended to encourage large employers in Medway to provide more supported placements (internships and full employment) to young people with SEND.***
- 22. *The Cabinet be recommended to investigate how to work further with the parents of young people with SEND to ensure their aspirations and ambitions are maximised when considering employment opportunities.***
- 23. *The Cabinet be recommended to review progress made in improving the offers of traineeships and apprenticeships in Medway to Care Leavers which was raised by the Support for Care Leavers Task Group in 2016 and also the extent to which pre-employment opportunities are being offered to vulnerable young people across Medway more generally.***
- 24. *The Cabinet be recommended to ask the Skills Board to review and take action to strengthen the training and education on offer locally in Medway for young people with SEND post 16 as many currently have to travel out of area to access this.***
- 25. *The Cabinet be recommended to ask the Early Help and Targeted Services Team to engage vulnerable service users more widely in the design and delivery of IAG services that affect them.***
- 26. *The Cabinet be recommended to consider increasing the number of places on the Skillnet programme and investigate further funding opportunities for the programme.***
- 27. *Noting the evidence the Task Group heard about difficulties some young people have in accessing employment and training opportunities using public transport where the journey involves more than one bus company, the Cabinet be recommended to pursue this as part of the Council's ongoing discussions with transport providers in Medway.***

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Task Group has reviewed the wide range of national policy initiatives and the significant level of activity underway across the Council and with regional and local partners to secure closer links between education providers and business, to support young people in the transition from education to employment and to develop effective interventions to bring down the number young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETS). The key finding of this review is that it is imperative to now bring all these plans and initiatives together and develop a more cohesive and collaborative approach to ensure the intended outcomes are achieved. The Medway Skills Board is best placed to do this and the Cabinet is asked to refer the following recommendations arising from this review to the Board for attention as a priority.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The NEET rate for 18-25 year olds in Medway and the contributory factors.

- 1. The Cabinet is recommended to refer the report of the Task Group to the Skills Board and for the recommendations to be taken into account by the Board in developing the Skills agenda for Medway and associated priority actions.***
- 2. The Cabinet be recommended to ask the Skills Board to consider how the data collected by the Council on NEETS can be used more creatively to align the potential of these young people with available employment and training opportunities.***
- 3. The Cabinet be recommended to ask the Skills Board to consider the range of factors contributing to a young person being NEET in Medway and evaluate what else can be done in terms of early preventative interventions.***

The Council's role as community leader in terms of a Medway Skills agenda working with partners locally and regionally to encourage the growth of the local job market and deliver outcomes around skills, training and employment for 18-25 year olds.

- 4. That the Cabinet be commended for its plan to establish a Medway Skills Board and recommended to prioritise employment opportunities for young people in developing the Skills Agenda; recognising that whilst 16-17 year olds are firmly on the radar, support and opportunities for 18-25 year olds should be strengthened, many of whom may be later learners or seeking employment after a break from education and training.***
- 5. The Cabinet be recommended to invite representatives of Medway Head teachers from each type of school to sit on the Skills Board.***
- 6. The Cabinet be recommended to prioritise development of a strategic employer engagement approach to effectively broker work placements and apprenticeships as feedback from employers in Medway is that smaller businesses do not have the capacity to deal with multiple requests.***

- 7. The Cabinet be recommended to request the Skills Board to gain a better understanding of the degree to which high quality and impartial careers guidance is being provided for 12-18 year olds in Medway, in particular to understand the extent to which non-academic routes are receiving “equal treatment” and also how schools are collaborating with colleges, the UTC and other training providers to secure this. .**
- 8. The Cabinet be recommended to ask the Skills Board to review OFSTED judgements under the Common Assessment Framework across Medway’s secondary schools of how successfully young people’s employability choices are being promoted and supported so that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment, self-employment or training.**
- 9. The Cabinet be recommended to write to the Secretary of State for Education to seek a reversal of the Government’s decision to reject the recommendation of the House of Commons Sub Committee on Education, Skills and the Economy that a specific careers guidance judgement be included as part of the Ofsted Common Inspection Framework.**
- 10. The Cabinet be recommended to encourage schools to access the Job Centre Plus support for schools scheme to schools (intended to assist schools to deliver their statutory duty to provide high quality, independent and impartial careers advice to pupils aged from 12/13 up to 17/18) through available channels, e.g. Head teachers forum, Schools’ Newsletter.**
- 11. The Cabinet be recommended to request the Early Help and Targeted Services Team to explore how to work further with community and voluntary organisations to raise awareness amongst parents of the range of IAG services available and the opportunities for young people.**
- 12. The Cabinet be recommended, in conjunction with partners, to review the objectives of the 16-19 Strategy with a view to embedding the Strategy’s learning, actions and outcomes in the emerging Skills Agenda for Medway.**
- 13. The Cabinet be recommended to request the Medway Skills Board to work with partners to develop a more flexible approach to apprenticeships across Medway by ensuring that further training and employment opportunities are investigated where a placement comes to an end without an offer of employment.**
- 14. The Skills Board be recommended that graduate retention should be a priority work stream for the Board with a view to encouraging both graduates who leave Medway to study to return to Medway and also non Medway students studying in Medway to stay in the area.**
- 15. The Cabinet be recommended to send a copy of the Task Group’s report to all head teachers of secondary schools in Medway for their information and also request that the report be considered at a meeting of the Medway Secondary Headteachers’ Association.**

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The Council's performance as an employer – 'leading by example'.

16. *That the Council should become a member of the Local Government Association's National Graduate Development Programme, which is a two year graduate management development programme.*
17. *That the Council works with its partners to develop a local public sector graduate scheme to allow high-quality candidates to develop experience in a number of organisations across health, local government and education.*
18. *That the Cabinet be recommended to review support made available for 18-25 years olds to access Council employment opportunities, and the quality of work experience placement opportunities with the Council (with a view to achieving the national quality standard accreditation).*
19. *The Cabinet be recommended to*
 - a) *agree in principle that:*
 - iii) *businesses contracting with the Council above a specified threshold must be signed up to the Disability Confident Scheme,*
 - iv) *businesses bidding for contracts below the agreed threshold be required to confirm whether they are Disability Confident and that this information be used by the Council for monitoring purposes, and;*
 - b) *request the Chief Legal Officer to report back to Cabinet with options and a recommended threshold.*

Action required to address the particular needs of vulnerable young people including looked after children and those with disabilities in the 18-25 age range.

20. *The Cabinet be recommended to ask the Skills Board to consider how best to further promote the particular attributes and qualities that SEND students can offer to employers.*
21. *The Cabinet, via the Skills Board, be recommended to encourage large employers in Medway to provide more supported placements (internships and full employment) to young people with SEND.*
22. *The Cabinet be recommended to investigate how to work further with the parents of young people with SEND to ensure their aspirations and ambitions are maximised when considering employment opportunities.*
23. *The Cabinet be recommended to review progress made in improving the offers of traineeships and apprenticeships in Medway to Care Leavers which was raised by the Support for Care Leavers Task Group in 2016 and also the extent to which pre-employment opportunities are being offered to vulnerable young people across Medway more generally.*

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- 24. *The Cabinet be recommended to ask the Skills Board to review and take action to strengthen the training and education on offer locally in Medway for young people with SEND post 16 as many currently have to travel out of area to access this.***
- 25. *The Cabinet be recommended to ask the Early Help and Targeted Services Team to engage vulnerable service users more widely in the design and delivery of IAG services that affect them.***
- 26. *The Cabinet be recommended to consider increasing the number of places on the Skillnet programme and investigate further funding opportunities for the programme.***
- 27. *Noting the evidence the Task Group heard about difficulties some young people have in accessing employment and training opportunities using public transport where the journey involves more than one bus company, the Cabinet be recommended to pursue this as part of the Council's ongoing discussions with transport providers in Medway.***

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b) Department of Education

Kent and Medway Area Review of Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges

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c) South East Local Economic Partnership

South East Local Economic Partnership Growth Deal 2016/17-21

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d) Kent County Council

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h) Local Government Association

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DIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

TITLE Name / description of the issue being assessed	Task Group on Employment Opportunities for young people in Medway aged 18-25
DATE Date the DIA is completed	19 th December 2017
LEAD OFFICER Name, title and dept of person responsible for carrying out the DIA.	Martin Hall, Greenspace and Skills Programme Manager

1 Summary description of the proposed change

- What is the change to policy / service / new project that is being proposed?
- How does it compare with the current situation?

The Task Group on Employment Opportunities for Young People in Medway aged 18 – 25 explored four key lines of enquiry. These focused on NEETS, employment and skills provision, the Medway Apprenticeship Academy and finally, Early Help (Special Education Needs and Disabilities, and Looked After Children). Members and Officers held a series of themed evidence sessions to which external stakeholders and service users were invited to speak about their experiences. The Task Group on Employment Opportunities for young people in Medway aged 18-25 considered the evidence and generated 27 recommendations across the four key lines of enquiry.

The Task Group has reviewed the wide range of national policy initiatives and the significant level of activity underway across the Council and with regional and local partners to secure closer links between education providers and business, to support young people in the transition from education to employment and to develop effective interventions to bring down the number young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETS).

The key finding of this review is the need to bring all the various Early Help, skills and employability plans and initiatives together and to develop a more cohesive and collaborative approach to skills ensuring the intended outcomes are achieved.

The Medway Skills Board is best placed to do this and the Cabinet is asked to refer several of the recommendations arising from this review the Board for attention as a priority.

2 Summary of evidence used to support this assessment

- Eg: Feedback from consultation, performance information, service user records etc.
- Eg: Comparison of service user profile with Medway Community Profile
- Medway Council Plan (2016 to 22);
- The Council’s 16-19 Strategy;
- Medway Council’s Looked After Children Strategy (2016 – 20);
- Youth Unemployment Statistics – House of Commons library (2017);

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- Report of the DfE Kent and Medway Area review of further education and sixth form colleges (2017);
 - NEETS data and trends (2015 – 2017). Council officers
 - Current and former apprentices:
 - Representatives from the Department of Work and Pensions, Medway Parent and Carers' Forum, Skillnet, Bradfields Academy, Mid Kent and College as well as considering written submissions from the Regional Schools Commissioner, Fort Pitt Thomas Aveling Academies and the Greenacre Academies Trust

3 What is the likely impact of the proposed change?

Is it likely to :

- Adversely impact on one or more of the protected characteristic groups?
- Advance equality of opportunity for one or more of the protected characteristic groups?
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't?

(insert ✓ in one or more boxes)

Protected characteristic groups (Equality Act 2010)	Adverse impact	Advance equality	Foster good relations
Age		✓	✓
Disability		✓	✓
Gender reassignment			
Marriage/civil partnership			
Pregnancy/maternity		✓	
Race			
Religion/belief			
Sex			
Sexual orientation			
Other (eg low income groups)		✓	✓

4 Summary of the likely impacts

- Who will be affected?
- How will they be affected?

The Task Group's recommendations focus on those between 18 and 25 years of age. The recommendations have a broad positive focus for all those between 18 and 25, with generic recommendations focusing on careers

information, advice and guidance and soft skills. However, it is necessary for additional attention and attention to be directed towards important users such as those not in employment, education or training, care leavers and young people with SEND. It is not possible to focus on all the key areas so five areas have been highlighted below.

Who? **NEETS**

How? By moving NEETS (Not in Employment, Education and Training) and those at risk of becoming NEETS towards positive destinations. The NEET position will be reported to the Skills Board with a view to identifying and aligning resources and support. Measures that decrease the likelihood of at risk groups becoming NEETS will be championed.

Who? Those receiving **Careers Information Advice and Guidance (IAG)**. The evidence and recommendations reflect the importance of IAG in improving employability and good decision making. The recommendations encourage the spread of good practice in the delivery of careers advice, plus its targeting to key cohorts and priority business sectors.

Who? All **school / college leavers** could be encouraged to develop better soft skills to make them work ready.

How? Opportunities for greater engagement in workplace activities, such as through Technical levels (T-levels), work fairs, engagement with Guilds, will foster development of desired soft skills.

Who? Young people with **SEND**.

How: The Skills Board could encourage consideration of more and better supported placements (internships and full employment) to young people with SEND.

Who? **Care Leavers**.

How? The Skills Board could work with stakeholders to improve the offer of traineeships and apprenticeships to Care Leavers across Medway.

5 What actions can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impacts, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations?

- What alternative ways can the Council provide the service?
- Are there alternative providers?
- Can demand for services be managed differently?

Not applicable.

Employment Opportunities for 18-25 Year Olds (including Apprenticeships)

6 Action plan

- Actions to mitigate adverse impact, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations and/or obtain new evidence

Action	Lead	Deadline or review date
Member Skills Board to review Task Group's recommendations.	Sunny Ee, Head of Regeneration Delivery	Spring 2018
Member Skills Board to confirm skills priorities and actions.	Sunny Ee, Head of Regeneration Delivery	Spring 2018
Engagement of stakeholders in skills actions.	Sunny Ee, Head of Regeneration Delivery	Summer 2018
Development of Skills Plan for Medway.	Sunny Ee, Head of Regeneration Delivery	Summer 2018
Hold annual Skills and Employability Summit.	Sunny Ee, Head of Regeneration Delivery	Autumn 2018

7 Recommendation

The recommendation by the lead officer should be stated below. This may be:

- to proceed with the change, implementing the Action Plan if appropriate
- consider alternatives
- gather further evidence

If the recommendation is to proceed with the change and there are no actions that can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impact, it is important to state why.

For the Skills Board to review of the Task Group's skills and employability recommendations alongside an assessment of current service provision (both internal and external) and to proceed with the development of Skills and Employability priorities, Plan and Summit.

There is no current evidence of adverse impacts requiring mitigation. Such impacts may become apparent in the future and therefore the Skills Board will review the DIA on an annual basis at the Skills and Employability Summit.

Proceed with the proposed recommendations.

8 Authorisation

The authorising officer is consenting that:

- the recommendation can be implemented
- sufficient evidence has been obtained and appropriate mitigation is planned
- the Action Plan will be incorporated into the relevant Service Plan and monitored

Assistant Director

Thomasz Kozlowski

Date

19 December 2017

Contact your Performance and Intelligence hub for advice on completing this assessment

RCC:	phone 2443	email: annamarie.lawrence@medway.gov.uk
C&A (Children's Social Care):	contact your usual P&I contact	
C&A (all other areas):	phone 4013	email: jackie.brown@medway.gov.uk
BSD:	phone 2472/1490	email: corpipi@medway.gov.uk
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