

Progress Update – Employment Opportunities for 18-25 Year Olds (including apprenticeships)

No.	Recommendation	Responsible Officer	Six Month Progress
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.	Skills and Employment Manager	The recommendations have been taken to the Skills Board by Martin Hall in February 2018. The recommendations of the report are being integrated into the skills & employability plan for Medway.
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.	Skills and Employment Manager	This is incorporated into the skills & employability plan, which has a big focus on supporting NEETs. Working with the youth service, clear routes to employment will be established.
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.	Skills and Employment Manager	The youth service is establishing the current NEET picture in Medway. This will be used to understand contributing factors. The newly formed Medway Education Partnership has the potential to be a platform to discuss early interventions at school.

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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.	Deputy Chief Executive/ Assistant Director, Physical and Cultural Regeneration	The skills & employability plan is for all ages, covering from reception to retirement. It is however recognised that 18-25s may require significant support to access training and entrance into the work place. 18-25 year olds will be considered throughout the plan and the commitment to this age group is reflected by the fact that the Employ Medway service has most success with 18-25 year olds.
5	The Cabinet be recommended to invite representatives of Medway Head teachers from each type of school to sit on the Skills Board.	Skills and Employment Manager	The precise model for stakeholder engagement within the boards is to be shortly finalised, however Head Teacher representatives will be invited. Stuart Gardner from the Thinking School's Trust has been approached as a possible candidate.
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.	Deputy Chief Executive/ Assistant Director, Physical and Cultural Regeneration	This is a key action within the skills & employability plan, with an employer engagement sub-plan to be written. A small selection of businesses will be used as test bed for potential engagement activities, so that our support offers will be suitable and effective for SMEs.

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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.	Skills and Employment Manager	The Careers Strategy released by government in 2017 will provide the grounding to ensure that all routes are given “equal treatment”. The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC), is designed to support the government’s aim to help young people consider all options. Relevant conversations are taking place to bring the CEC to Medway schools.
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.	Skills and Employment Manager	The Careers and Enterprise company has a tool called ‘compass’, which is a free tool for schools and colleges in England, that helps to evaluate careers activity against the eight benchmarks of best practice – known as the Gatsby Benchmarks. This can be promoted to schools through the Medway Education Partnership.

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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	Director of Children and Adults	<p>The skills and employability plan seeks to take advantage of the government careers strategy requirements for schools. With a careers lead now being on the leadership team of every school, there is an opportunity to strengthen careers guidance throughout Medway.</p> <p>Schools and academies purchase through MY Trust a programme of work named 'Trust Careers'. Our new plan drives forward the change programme needed which has Full Council agreement. Further work needs to take place (as to be highlighted in the plan) to create a joint understanding of a model that strengthens career guidance into meaningful economy related employment (supported by further education). Other vehicles for delivering careers strategy within schools are being investigated.</p>
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.	Director of Children and Adults	Job Centre Plus have engaged with 5 schools in Medway to date. This is something that can be promoted to schools through the Medway Education Partnership and the Careers and Enterprise company.
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.	Head of Early Help and Targeted Services	The head of Early Help and Targeted Services has engaged with the Medway voluntary organisations coordinator, providing resources and information. Bi-annual meetings have been organised moving forwards.

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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.	Director of Children and Adults	The 16-19 strategy learning, actions and outcomes are reflected in the new skills & employability plan. One of the 4 priorities is 'Transforming NEETs into EETs', which will focus on 16-19 year olds.
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.	Skills and Employment Manager	Apprenticeships is a theme which cuts across all of the priorities in the skills & employability plan and is a focus of many of the actions. There is particular opportunity through the levy for flexible placements. This will be a particular focus of the Medway Apprenticeship Placement scheme, with sustainability a key focus of the scheme.
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.	Skills and Employment Manager	Graduate retention is an action within the skills & employability plan, with a particular focus on ensuring that Medway business and careers information is a part of University careers guidance. A clear picture of graduate destinations is also being built up.
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.	Director of Children and Adults	The new skills & employability plan will be shared with the Medway Education Partnership, the Medway Secondary Headteachers Association and Medway Education Leaders Association (Primary 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.	Assistant Director, Transformation	The requirements for the National Graduate Development programme will be reviewed as part of the forthcoming skills & employability plan.
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.	Assistant Director, Transformation	Medway Council has a strong relationship with local Universities and a history of recruiting graduates and providing graduate placements. Opportunities for a scheme being started is being explored.
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).	Assistant Director, Transformation	The Medway Council Apprenticeship Academy offers a potential route to employment for 18-25 year olds alongside usual recruitment opportunities. HR have a raft of support available to staff. Further opportunities for support are being reviewed as part of the skills & employability plan.
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.	Chief Legal Officer	This is being taken forwards under the new skills & employability plan. There is a specific action to review feasible options for including disability confidence and skills requirements within procurement.

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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.	Skills and Employment Manager	Supporting SEND students is relevant to all actions within the skills & employability plan. With the launch of the grant for businesses who employ those with an Education Health and Care plan, there is a good opportunity to promote the attributes and qualities of SEND students.
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.	Skills and Employment Manager	A range of activities that businesses can sign up to will be part of the employer engagement plan and will be promoted as part of a future skills summit. A matrix of activities businesses can undertake to support young people is being developed in conjunction with MidKent college.
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.	Deputy Director, Children and Adults	Within the Early Help and Targeted service, there is an Information Advice and Guidance Officer who specifically supports young people with SEND and their parents and schools. SEND parenting workshops are also taking place at regular intervals.
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.	Deputy Director, Children and Adults	This action has been taken forward by the corporate parenting board. There is also an action within the skills & employability plan to promote the new apprenticeship grant for care leavers to employers.
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.	Skills and Employment Manager	Supporting young people with SEND is an important part of the new skills & employability plan. There is an action to create pathways to employment, which will involve reviewing the local offer.

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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.	Head of Early help and Targeted Services	The Early Help and Targeted Service team is focused on supporting young people with some of the most complex needs. With IAG specialists for - looked after children, youth offending and SEND and a virtual social media platform, there is appropriate support for vulnerable users.
26	The Cabinet be recommended to consider increasing the number of places on the Skillnet programme and investigate further funding opportunities for the programme.	Assistant Director, Commissioning, Business and Intelligence	Skillnet has since become Bemix. Funding was provided for a cohort of 8 young people to undertake a supported internship in 2017/18, with another 12 due to start in 2018/19. Of the 8 that have finished the programme, 6 have progressed into full time employment and the remaining 2 will receive further support.
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.	Assistant Director, Front Line Services	Medway Council continues to have regular dialogue with all transport providers in Medway. As part of this, we aim to promote good relationships between the bus operators and seek ways in which the passenger experience can be improved. Whilst tickets that can be used across all services are available, the Council continues to lobby for all bus operators to take part in the Connected Kent & Medway smartcard scheme, which would allow easier transfer between services operated by different companies.