

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1 OCTOBER 2020

UPDATE ON CHILDREN WHO ARE NOT IN EMPLOYMENT EDUCATION OR TRAINING (NEET)

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Summary

This report provides an update on the current situation with young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) or whose destination is Unknown to the Council. It will cover performance in 2019/2020 academic year and plans for the academic year 2020/2021.

1. Budget and policy framework

1.1. This report sits in the Council priorities ‘supporting Medway’s people to realise their potential’ and ‘Maximising Regeneration and economic growth’, particularly ‘Residents with jobs and skills’. This Committee’s remit is to scrutinise services for children and young people in Medway.

2. Background

2.1. Services for those who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) have been delivered by Medway Council since September 2017, whereby the Information Advice and Guidance Team was established to support NEETs and meet our statutory obligations.

2.2. The team is responsible for working with academic age 16 and 17 year olds who are not in education, employment or training, offering support to positive progression and reduce NEET figures.

2.3. The team also tracks NEETs and Unknowns and reports data to the Department for Education.

3. Update on performance

- 3.1. A variety of factors across the 2019/2020 academic year lead to increased concern for our young people who are NEET and Unknown. Unknown figures were very high, partly due to reduced capacity within the Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) team, whilst a Council wide spending moratorium meant that letters that are normally sent to every Unknown did not go within the usual timeframes.
- 3.2. This concern was raised at the Medway Skills Boards, and subsequently was raised at Corporate Management Team and made a Council priority. Focus was placed on two key areas – reducing Unknowns and sourcing NEET provision
- 3.3. Raising NEETs as a priority had the positive effect of engaging more teams internally and mobilising partners externally. The IAG team were able to recruit and the letters were sent. Tracking activities subsequently increased, which alongside gaining access to more data sources and door knocking has led to a significant reduction of Unknowns (see the table at 3.4). It is important to note that typically as Unknown numbers reduce, NEET numbers increase.

3.4.

Category	Date: 03/06/20	Date:31/08/20	Difference
NEETS	184 (3.0%)	257 (4.1%)	+73
Unknowns	626 (10.0%)	250 (4.0%)	-376

- 3.5 NEET provision in the area has also disappeared due to a lack of funding - primarily European Social Funding. For the majority of the academic year, MidKent and Nacro were the main NEET providers. There has been a reduction of 13 providers and an estimated 180 learning opportunities. Where providers do have small pockets of funding, we seek to work with them to promote their offers to our young people who are NEET.

4. Plans for 2020/2021

- 4.1. Reducing Unknowns will continue to be a focus, and door knocking will continue. As the team is fully staffed, Unknowns are not expected to increase to similar levels in 20/21. Initial data for 20/21 will be available at the end of October.
- 4.2. Opportunities to create NEET provision in Medway are being explored and work is ongoing to make the most of government initiatives such as Kickstart. NEETs will also be an area of priority in the newly formed Kent and Medway Employment Taskforce.

5. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Continued lack of provision	If Medway Council are unable to fund NEET provision, then options for NEETs will continue to be limited.	Star Chamber process to secure funding. Work with DWP and other partners to maximise existing provision.	C2
Increased Unknowns	If we have large numbers of young people whose destination is unknown, we are unable to support them to a positive destination.	Increased tracking, continued engagement with school/college, door knocking and utilising other data sources.	C2
Schools/College not engaging and sending through destination data	If Schools and College do not return their data to the IAG team, unknowns will increase and we will not be able to support those who need it.	Continued dialogue with school/college and continued support from the education department.	D2

6. Looked after Children

- 6.1 25 looked after children are currently NEET and are likely to be affected by a lack of opportunity due to COVID-19. Any NEET provision designed will need to ensure that Looked after Children are prioritised.
- 6.2 On the 28 October 2020 an event called Brighter Futures is being held virtually, informing businesses about the Care Leaver Covenant, how they can offer opportunities to Care Leavers and Looked after Children and hear examples of the enormous positives that can arise after providing a Care Leaver an opportunity.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

8. Legal implications

- 8.1. There are no legal implications associated with this report.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1. The Committee is recommended to note the report.

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Appendices

None

Background papers

None