

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING (NEET)

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Summary

This report provides an overview of the current performance in Medway in respect of young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and provides a summary of the work underway to support young people into appropriate programs and opportunities, post-16.

1. Budget and policy framework

1.1. Guidance published by the Department for Education (DfE) in September 2016 sets out the following responsibilities of Local Authorities (LAs) in relation to young people’s participation in Education, Employment or Training (EET):

- LA’s have broad duties to encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in education or training. Specifically, these are:
 - 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 19 to 25 and for whom an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan is maintained. This is a duty 6 under the Education Act 1996. To fulfil this, LAs need to have a strategic overview of the provision available in their area and to identify and resolve gaps in provision.
 - To make available to all young people aged 13-19 and to those between 20 and 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), support that will encourage, enable or assist them to participate in education or training under Section 68 of the Education

and Skills Act (ESA) 2008.

- Tracking young people's participation is a key element of these duties. LAs are required to collect information about young people so that those who are not participating, or are NEET, can be identified and given support to re-engage. Robust tracking also provides the LA with information that will help to ensure that suitable education and training provision is available and that resources can be targeted effectively.
- In addition, the ESA 2008 placed two Raising the Participation Age (RPA) related duties on LAs with regard to 16- and 17-year-olds:
 - LAs must promote the effective participation in education and training of 16 and 17 year olds in their area with a view to ensuring that those persons fulfil the duty to participate in education or training. A key element of this is identifying the young people in their area who are covered by the duty to participate and encouraging them to find a suitable education or training place.
 - LAs must make arrangements – i.e. maintain a tracking system - to identify 16 and 17 year olds who are not participating in education or training. Putting in place robust arrangements to identify young people who are not engaged in education or training or who have left provision enables LAs to offer support as soon as possible.

2. Data and Performance

2.1. NEET Scorecard

2.1.1. The DfE publishes an annual performance scorecard for NEETs, usually in the October following the Academic year. However, the publication of the 2021/22 scorecard has been delayed by the DfE. The 20/21 full scorecard is included in Appendix 1.

2.1.2. The rate of NEETs varies considerably throughout the academic year with the highest rates being seen at the start of the year and then reducing as young people find provision. The DfE Annual Scorecard uses an average of the rates for December, January, and February for its overall figure.

2.2. NEET and Not Known Data

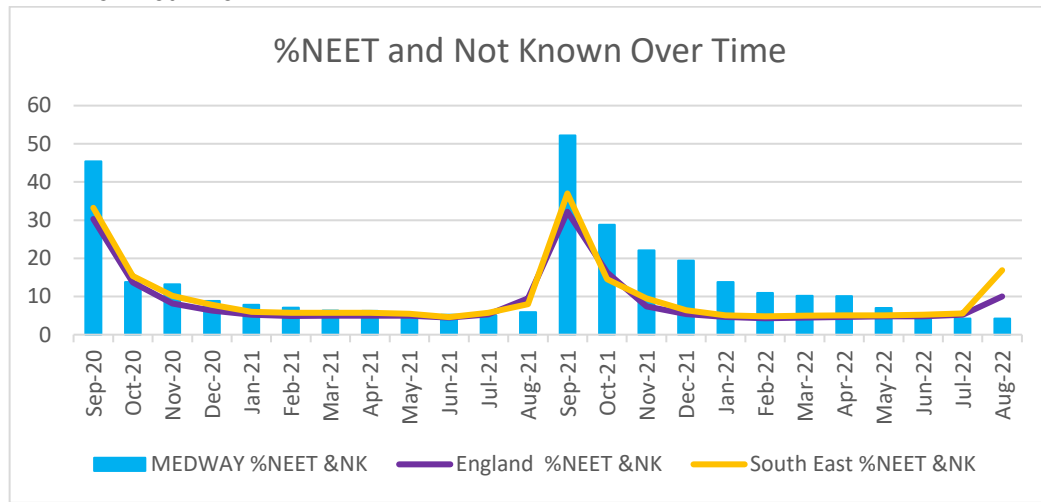
2.2.1. The NEET and Not Known data referenced in this report is only validated up to 20/21. Later data should be considered in the context that it has been taken from Medway's internal systems and is still subject to DfE moderation and adjustment.

2.2.2. The rate of NEET and Not Known is cyclical. In September, the proportion of Not Knowns is always high as the council awaits confirmation of destinations from partners and begin tracking those young people whose activity is Not Known. During the year the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Team

track young people and provide support and guidance to those who are NEET or Not known, bringing the rate down.

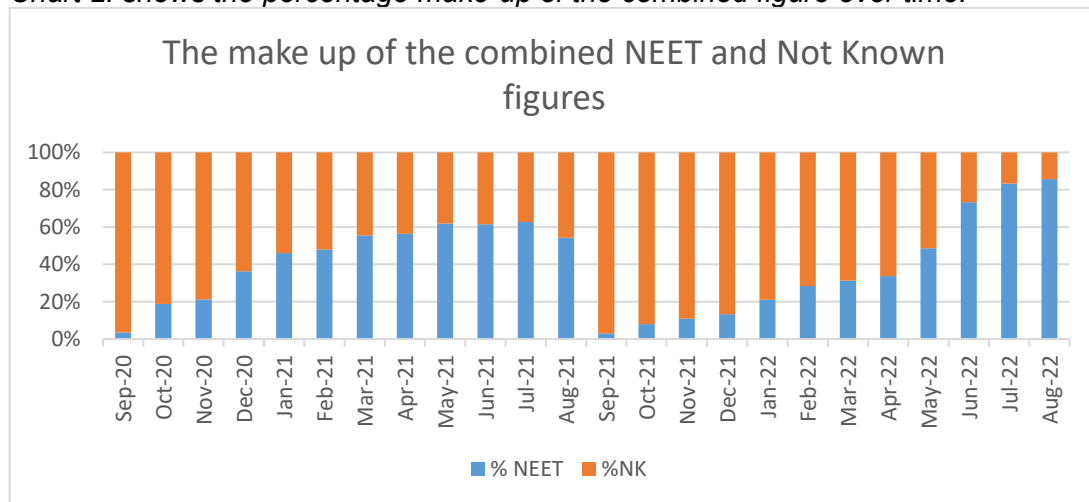
2.2.3. A significant amount of work has taken place over the last few months by both the tracking and systems team to reduce the numbers of Not Known. Some of the issues were in relation to data processing. In August 2022, the number of 16 and 17 yr olds in Medway who were either NEET or Not Known was at its lowest ever recorded level at 4.2% (272 young people), made up of 3.6% NEET and 0.6% Not Knowns.

Chart 1: The combined percentage of 16- and 17-year-olds whose activity is either NEET or Not Known



2.2.4. The success in tracking and data cleansing in 2021-22 can be seen in the smaller proportion of Not Knowns in the later cohorts.

Chart 2: shows the percentage make-up of the combined figure over time.

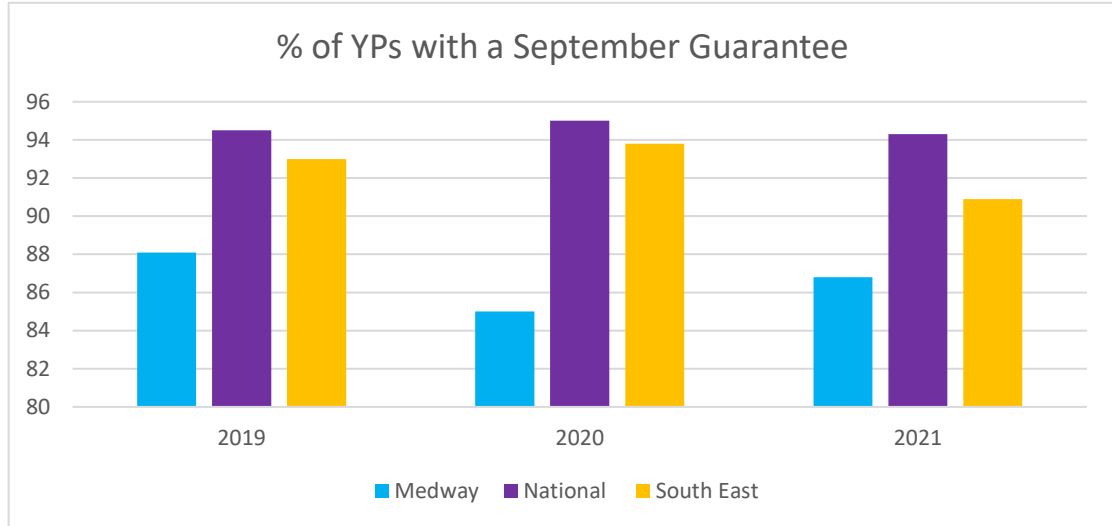


2.3 September Guarantee Data

2.3.1. The Local Authority has a statutory duty to record the intended destination of 16 and 17 yr olds. Those with an EET destination are recorded as having a

September Guarantee. This information is also presented on the DfE annual scorecard. Medway has had fewer young people with a September Guarantee, than both National and the South East over the past 3 years.

Chart 8: Proportion of 16- and 17-year-olds with a September Guarantee - DfE Annual Scorecard

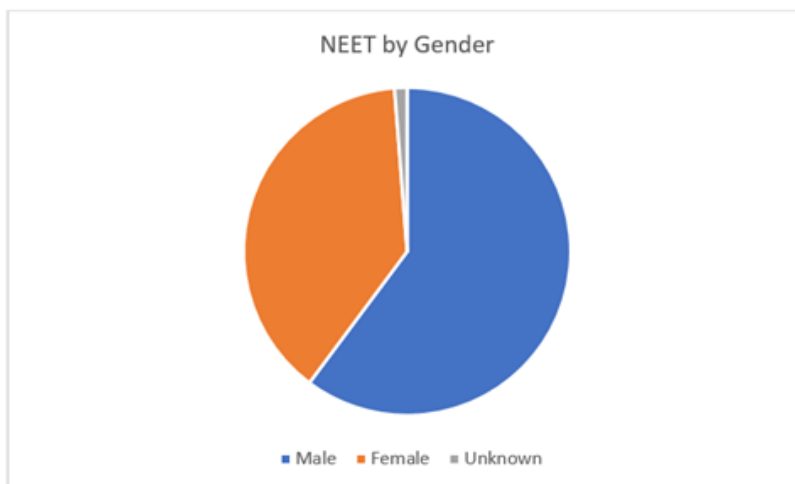


2.3.2. In September 2022, 82% of 16 and 17 yr olds had a September guarantee. This equates to 86.9% of 16 yr olds and 77% of 17-year-olds.

2.4. Demographic Data

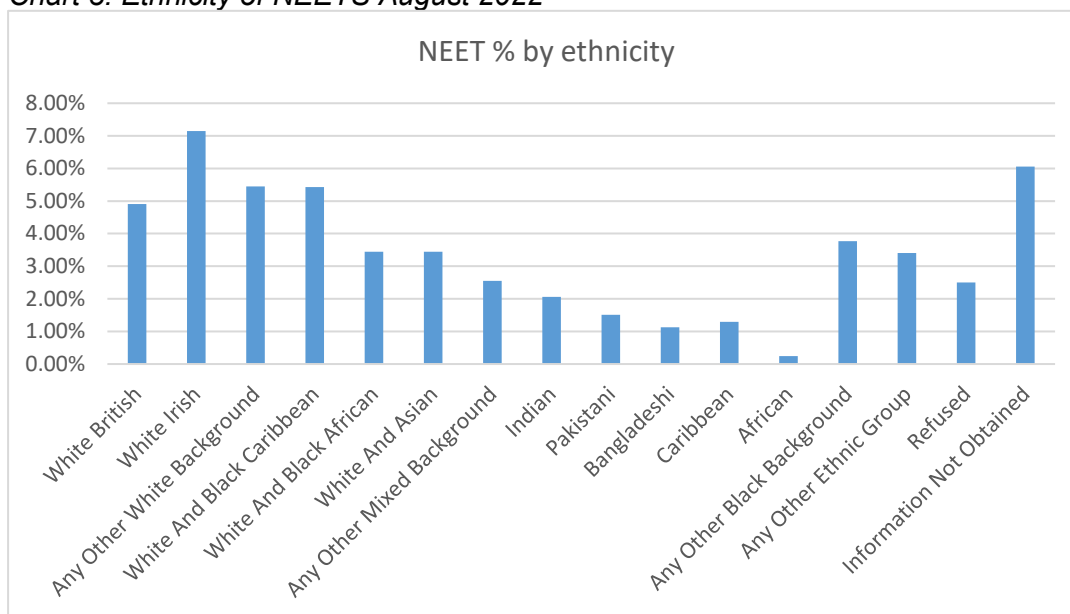
2.4.1 Due to the transient nature of the NEET cohort the gender distribution varies. The chart below shows the gender split in August 2022.

Chart 3: Gender split for NEETs August 2022



2.4.2 The most prevalent ethnic group for NEET 16 and 17 year olds is white Irish 7%. 6% of young people who are NEET have no ethnicity recorded.

Chart 3: Ethnicity of NEETS August 2022



2.5. Vulnerable Groups

2.5.1 Individual services track those 16 and 17 year olds who belong to a vulnerable group, including Children in Care and Care leavers and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEND). Within the August NEET and Not Known Cohort of 275 young people, 19% belong to one or more of the vulnerable groups.

3. Children in Care and Care Leavers

3.1. Children in Care Aged 16-17 Years Old

3.1.1. Chart 4: Profile of Y12 & Y13 young people in Care to Medway as at October 2022

Age/Year group	Total in cohort	% Training	% In School	% In College	% NEET
16 yr olds	50	6%	20%	52%	20%
17 yr olds	52	6%	23%	38%	31%

*% may not make 100% due to rounding

3.1.2. The number of care experienced young people engaged in EET fluctuates. The disruption to learning and engagement in EET during and post Covid has impacted on children in care and care experienced young people in many ways, including:

- Disruptions in learning and training
- A greater number of foster care and placement changes
- Increased uncertainty around next steps

3.1.3. Although NEET, care experienced young people in Medway may be accessing interim tuition or training whilst waiting to confirm EET placements.

- 3.1.4. Some care experienced young people may be awaiting care placements in and out of Medway and are unable to secure EET placements until they are settled.
- 3.1.5. Medway Virtual School (MVS) meet monthly with the IAG team and the Leaving Care participation and engagement worker to review planning for care experienced young people who are NEET. Pupils are RAG rated and interventions and support such as supporting with college applications and discussing new opportunities (job adverts/schemes) are put in place. Young people's EET journeys are tracked both here and in pathway plans, with management oversight. Actions in relation to PEP's and the desired outcomes are also explored.
- 3.1.6. The risk of young people leaving college at the start of the year is higher. MVS and Leaving Care Participation and Engagement staff attend Mid Kent College every week in September to work with Key staff in attendance and finance to ensure young care experienced pupils are attending the courses they applied for and receiving the bursaries they are entitled to, to support with transport, meals and resources.

3.2. **Care Experienced Young People aged 18-25**

- 3.2.1. In September 2021, 30% of care leavers were in EET. This rose to 58% by February 2022. In September 2022 the number of EET young people aged 18-21 has increased to 61%. This demonstrates the positive impact of the proactive work that has taken place to support young people into work or education and is now above the national average for this cohort.
- 3.2.2. The council recruited an aspirations officer into the 16+ service who supports young people, aged 16-25, to find employment or training, with a particular focus on enabling young people to access opportunities generated by the Medway Skills & Employment Grants Scheme. This support includes:
- Access to Further/Higher Education/Further training opportunities
 - CV/Application/Interview support
 - Work experience access
 - NEET programmes
 - Kickstart programme
 - Supported Internships/Supported Employment
 - Apprenticeships/Employment.
- 3.2.3. Personal advisors (PAs) support young people with accessing EET opportunities, preparing good quality CV's and applications, preparing for interviews, and advise on any work/education related issues that may arise.
- 3.2.4. Despite a significant improvement in EET engagement for young care experienced people in Medway, there are several areas which require continued focus, including for care experienced young people who are pregnant or parents, whose engagement with EET is more challenging. One of the actions in place to support this work is a personal advisor in the care

leavers service, who supports care experienced parents, as well as the aspirations officer, who offers advice and support to young people.

3.2.5. The establishment of a Hub at the Elaine Centre and the WREC Room in the Pentagon has provided unique opportunities for young people to drop in for advice and support. A weekly Job Café is run at the Hub supporting with CV writing, job/college applications, searching for opportunities or advocating with providers if any issues. Increased capacity has been put in place on site at the Hub to provide care experienced young people greater support in respect of health, wellbeing, finance and independent living.

3.3. **Next steps to promote engagement in EET for children in care and care experienced young people (planned actions for the next 6-12 months)**

3.3.1. There are plans for EET opportunities to be provided earlier in the young person's pathway planning process so that by the age of 16 the young person and the network are already preparing for the career or education trajectory. Independent reviewing officers and other children's services teams will be considering this in earlier reviews of the care plan.

3.3.2. Increase employer engagement by creating more working relationships that will benefit care leavers – this is an ongoing aspect of the aspirations officer alongside the lead for the skills and employability programme manager.

3.3.3. Continue to promote opportunities for care leavers across the council and the local business sector through the "family business model". This work is led by the Assistant Directors for Children's Services and Front-Line services, through the corporate parenting delivery group. This includes the work led by the chief organisational culture officer, to provide taster sessions during care leavers week in October 2022, which led to offers of traineeships and also potential apprenticeships for young people.

4. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

4.1 The Local Authority has a duty to identify and name Post 16 and Post 19 placements in a young person's EHCP by 31st March the year they are due to leave school or change college/training placement.

4.2 This is done after an annual review of the young person's EHCP and consultation with the young person, their current placement, and their parent/carers regarding their preferences for their next placement.

4.3 In October and November, after the young person has left school or their current placement, the SEN Team will contact the education and training providers to check that the young person has enrolled at their named placement.

4.4 The SEN Team then contact each young person who is potentially NEET to establish if they have started with another provider or are NEET. Where the young person is NEET they are referred to the IAG team for advice and

guidance and, if required, the necessary amendments to the EHCP are made. As such the number of young people with an EHCP who are NEET remains low.

5. Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Team

- 5.1. At the start of the academic year, all 16 and 17 yr olds become Unknown. The IAG Team, and the Business Information Team, track and record the destinations of Medway's young people using data supplied by schools and the college. Frequently this data is submitted after the deadline and so delays the recording of figures for quarter 3. The IAG Team continue to work with providers to get the information as early as possible.
- 5.2. The IAG Team continue to track destinations from the data held in the Integrated Youth Support System (IYSS) and use systems across Medway Council to clarify information where details may be lacking on IYSS. The IAG Team have regular dedicated tracking weeks followed by a re-evaluation of the 'Unknowns' and planning of future tracking activities.
- 5.3. The IAG Team have seen an increase in self-referrals from young people who did not receive the GCSE grades they required.

6. NEET Provision

- 6.1. Funding from the Modern Medway Fund, totalling £100,000, has been assigned to be used to develop NEET Provision. The funding was intended to provide provision to support a minimum of 50 young people.
- 6.2. MidKent College has been commissioned to deliver this provision. The commission included preparation for employment, a transition carousel across a variety of courses alongside intensive engagement.
 - 15 young people signed up for cohort 1 and took part in the programme.
 - Out of the 15: 7 moved into or have applied for college courses; 4 have moved into employment, with additional support from the Medway Council 'Be Yourself' programme; 5 are still NEET and continue to be supported.
 - A second cohort will take place in November/December to complete the programme.
- 6.3. The current 'Be Yourself' programme is commissioned through the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to help improve employment outcomes or prospects for future employment for young people aged 16-24 years old facing complex and intractable barriers to work. Since November 2021, 83 young people have moved into employment. The DWP are no longer able to fund this and therefore the remainder of the Modern Medway Fund will be used to keep Be Yourself going, with a complete focus on 16 and 17 yr old NEETs.

7. NEET Prevention Project

- 7.1. Extra support has been provided to the Victory Academy as a pilot to help reduce their NEET population. Colleagues in the Skills and Employment Team have arranged extra Enterprise Adviser support; senior business people supporting with careers.
- 7.2. Additional learning resources and offers of support have been signposted, for example apprenticeship and vacancy information. Furthermore, Victory Academy set aside a minimum of 1 hour every 2 weeks to dedicate to careers and progression. Early indications suggest a reduced NEET figure for Victory Academy this year.

8. Post-16 Review

- 8.1. Medway Council has commissioned external expert support to complete a detailed review of the education, training and employment offer available to young people aged 16-19 (up to aged 25 for those with an Education, Health and Care Plan).
- 8.2. The Post-16 Review will provide a diagnostic of the breadth and inclusivity of current post-16 options in Medway, identify and evidence areas for development, and provide recommendations for improvements that the Council and its partners can take forward.
- 8.3. The overall aim of the Review is to provide a base on which to strategically plan how the council ensures as wide a range of opportunities as possible are available and accessible to our young people. Identifying gaps in the current provision and curriculum offer, informed by both the interests of the young people and synergy with the labour market and further education opportunities.
- 8.4. Post-16 providers have already been engaged in this Review process and there are opportunities for young people, their parents/carers, schools and education, training and employment providers across Medway to share their experiences and ideas and feed into the Review.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note and comment on the report.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: DfE Annual Performance Scorecard – NEET and Not Knowns for the Academic Year 2020-2021

Background papers

None