

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 AUGUST 2023

POST-16 REVIEW

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Summary

Medway Council commissioned ACL Consulting to conduct a Review of Post-16 education, training and employment available to young people in Medway between October 2022 and February 2023. Medway's Post-16 Review was undertaken to 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 for the Council and partners to consider and take forward.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. The findings of the Review (which are set out in detail in Appendix 1) led to the identification of the following 11 principal recommendations:
 - i. **Identify aspirations; raise outcomes:** The 'offer' in school sixth forms needs to be improved in order that what is available more closely and accurately builds upon and reflects the aspirations of young people.
 - ii. **Develop technical/vocational provision at Level 3:** To improve awareness of technical education as an option that all young people should at least consider as a potential alternative to an academic route.
 - iii. **Ensure the sufficiency and sustainability of the post-16 offer:** It is important that the post-16 offer currently available to young people in Medway is sufficient and sustainable; in addition to provision at Level 3 (as above) there are two other aspects of provision that are causes for concern: small sixth forms; and providers delivering qualifications below Level 2, both in general and more specifically to young people who have been or who might become NEET.
 - iv. **Improve young people's work-readiness:** Medway Council and its partners should – as far as possible and practicable – agree a set of

minimum expectations that employers can reasonably have about young people's preparedness for work and the skills they will bring with them to the work place. Some of this will already be known but there would probably be value in producing and confirming a 'Medway statement of needs'.

- v. **Develop a single information source for post-16 opportunities:** A single information hub which includes details of all post-16 opportunities should be established so that young people can more easily find out for themselves and/or be signposted towards all the post-16 options they might consider.
- vi. **Provide on-going support for vulnerable young people:** A far better system of support for vulnerable pupils as they transition into, and remain in, post-16 learning is needed. Ideally this should match what was available (from one source or another) for these pupils just before their transition into post-16.
- vii. **Improve Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG):** The review found a mismatch in opinions about the effectiveness of current CEIAG arrangements in providing young people with the information they need on the full range of options that are available to them identified by the fieldwork needs to be addressed. Among other developments, a clearer vision for CEIAG is needed.
- viii. **Improve parent and carer engagement:** The Review noted that improvements to CEIAG (as per above recommendation) may support this and also suggests setting up a working party to engage with a representative sample of parents and carers to explore how, when and what to communicate, to further support parental understanding of opportunities for their (and their child's) aspirations.
- ix. **Develop an approach to information sharing:** The Review identified the following 'pressure points' for information sharing: (1) between pre- and post- 16 providers as the young person approaches the point of transition, to support progression; (2) at the point of transition and subsequently, to ensure that the transition is successful and to reduce the chance of a young person becoming NEET; (3) in the approach to and through transition at the end of 16-19 study, again with a view to helping ensure that a young person does not become NEET.
- x. **Improve access:** The fieldwork clearly identified transport difficulties as a potential disincentive to young people considering post-16 provision other than at their current school. The vast majority of Medway's post-16 providers will have a DBF allocation to use *inter alia* to support students who find it difficult to meet travel costs.
- xi. **Develop an overarching vision for post-16 provision in Medway:** To bring together the following two common themes that emerged from the Review into an overarching vision:

1. Young people should be encouraged to consider the full range of academic and vocational opportunities available to them at 16+, and that their choice should not be limited by what is available locally to them or by a lack of knowledge on their or their parents'/carers' behalf;
 2. Having made their choice, young people should then be supported to follow it, particularly during times of transition and especially for those young people whose previous difficulties or vulnerabilities may make it initially difficult for them to stay the course.
- 1.2. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and comment on the Post-16 Review report and its recommendations.

2. Budget and policy framework

- 2.1. 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):
- LAs 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.
- 2.2. 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.
 - 2.3. The Council's People Strategy 2021-25: Supporting Medway's people to realise their potential identifies five priorities for its children and young people – they will: have the best start in life; develop well; lead independent and fulfilled lives; contribute to their community; and have a meaningful say in decisions and services that shape their lives.
 - 2.4. The Council's Skills and Employability Plan for Medway 2035: Growing skills for a growing workforce is a “plan for all ages” that is intended to “support those in, and considering options for, primary, secondary, further and higher education ... [and] engage those who are not in employment, education or training [NEET], as well as those looking to take up apprenticeships.”
 - 2.5. In addition, the Medway Local Area Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities [SEND] Strategy 2022-25: Inclusion, Participation, Aspiration and Achievement sets out a number of specific ambitions for children and young people with SEND – they will: achieve the best outcomes through inclusion and participation; be prepared for a successful future at the earliest opportunity; have access to the right support, at the right time, in the right place; and be supported to recover from the pandemic.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Review was asked to consider how the current provision supports the delivery of these priorities and ambitions by ensuring that:
 - Medway's post-16 opportunities are accessible and inclusive for all its young people
 - Appropriate support is in place so that young people have the tools and help they need to be successful
 - Provision is of high quality and leads to further positive progression as young people move into young adulthood
- 3.2. The Review aimed to expand the options and life chances of our young people by providing the Council and stakeholders with an understanding of the key issues that young people and post-16 providers in Medway face, and how these can be addressed.

4. Approach

- 4.1. The Review was overseen by a Steering Group comprising Council staff, provider representatives and other stakeholders with an interest in post-16 provision in Medway. An external expert (ACL Consulting) was appointed to provide objectivity, insight, and rigour to the Review.
- 4.2. An extensive programme of fieldwork interviews and group discussions (completed by a research team of 8 comprising staff from ACL, the Council and Kent Further Education), supplemented by surveys and data analysis, informed the Review. The key elements of the workplan were:
- A programme of interviews with post-16 providers – all post-16 providers active in Medway in 2022-23 were interviewed for the Review. (Whilst it is possible that a provider may have been missed, the statement is a fair reflection of the extent to which providers were engaged in the Review)
 - Focus groups with young people in years 11 and 12 – a total of 23 groups were run across 11 schools (3 grammars; 8 non-selective schools [NSSs]), a pupil referral unit [PRU], and MidKent College [MKC]
 - Other, primarily qualitative, elements to the fieldwork – interviews with other, non-provider-based, individuals (principally Council staff and members, and employers)
 - Analysis of quantitative data, both local and national
 - An online survey of young people in Year 11 (240 responses were received, c. 6% of the total number of pupils in Year 11 in 2022-23) and their parents/carers (30 responses).

5. Risk Management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Lack of partnership engagement and commitment	<p>The Review itself and the recommendations are based on a network of providers, key partners and the Local Authority working together towards these common goals and aspirations.</p> <p>Therefore, any actions that are taken forward to address the</p>	A representative group of stakeholders to be identified (nominated) to be part of a multiagency Post-16 Strategic Board, focused on taking forward the recommendation that have been identified (and accepted).	CIII

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
	recommendations will require fair and equal commitment and engagement from all stakeholders and partners.		
Lack of coproduction with stakeholders, including young people and parents/carers	<p>Much of the review and it's recommendation draws on the experiences of young people and their families.</p> <p>In taking forward the recommendations of the Review, continued coproduction and feedback from young people and parents and carers will ensure that the Council, and it's partners, are reaching solutions that meet their needs and resolve issues that have been identified in past/current experiences.</p>	Through the establishment of formal governance to 'action plan' against the accepted recommendations, focused areas of engagement with young people, providers, parents and carers can be scoped. This will be fundamental to taking forward the findings of the Review.	CIII

Likelihood:	Impact:
A Very likely	I Catastrophic
B Likely	II Major
C Unlikely	III Moderate
D Rare	IV Minor

6. Financial implications

- 6.1. There are no specific financial implications arising from this report. However, please note that taking forward some or all of these recommendations will

require time and may require additional resources from across a wide range of different providers and partner agencies.

- 6.2. If any of the recommendations being explored require additional funding that cannot be met from existing Council resources, a further report will be presented to Council for approval.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1. No legal implications have been identified. The recommendations should not impair on the LA's duties and responsibilities to provide support to young people for their post-16 destinations.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Post-16 Review: Summary of Final Report – June 2023

Background documents

None