

Health and Wellbeing Board

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Medway Young People not in Education Employment or Training Update

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Summary

The report analyses the enrolment figures over the specified period, highlighting trends, growth rates, and potential implications for educational resources and planning.

1. Recommendation

1.1 The Board is asked to note the findings of the analysis report.

2. Budget and policy framework

2.1 Improvements outlined in the report seek to address, in part, the following priority of the One Medway Council Plan 2024/28:

— Priority Two: Benefitting from Good Education, Quality Jobs and a Growing Economy

2.2 In March the Department for Education (DfE) announced an investment of £160 million for colleges and other 16 to 19 providers in financial year 2025 to 2026, stating the funding would boost opportunities for students across the country and drive forward delivery of the critical skills needed to grow the economy.

They propose to direct funding by:

- increasing the per student funding rate, recognising the need for all providers to drive forward high-quality delivery, including recruiting and retaining staff in a competitive labour market
- increasing programme cost weightings for higher cost courses to boost capacity in priority sector subjects such as construction, manufacturing and digital which are vital to economic growth

- increasing funding for English and maths delivery and disadvantage funding to boost opportunity for disadvantaged learners and those who require further support to gain a level 2 in English and maths, along with those in care and care leavers

2.3 At the time of writing, the additional funding allocations have not been published but are expected shortly for all providers.

3. Background

3.1 The law requires all young people in England to continue in education or training until at least their 18th birthday¹, although in practice most young people continue until the end of the academic year in which they turn 18.

3.2 Local authorities have broad duties to encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in education or training. Specifically, these are:

- To secure enough suitable education and training provision to meet the reasonable needs of all young people in their area who are over compulsory school age but under 19 or aged 19 or over and for whom an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan is maintained.²
- To make available to all young people aged 13-19, and to those between 20 and 25 with Special Educational Needs (SEN), support it considers appropriate to encourage, enable or assist them to effectively participate in education or training.

3.3 Tracking young people's participation is a key element of these duties. Local authorities are required to collect information about young people in years 12 and 13 of their education (16 and 17 years old) so that those who are not participating can be identified and given support to re-engage. Robust tracking also provides the local authority with information that will help to ensure that suitable education and training provision is available and that resources can be targeted effectively.

3.4 To be classified as in Education, Employment, and Training (EET), a young person must participate in:

- full-time study in a school, college or with a training provider; or
- full-time work or volunteering (20 hours or more) combined with part-time education or training leading to relevant regulated qualifications; or
- an apprenticeship; traineeship; or supported internship.

A young person not engaged in this way is classified as Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET).

¹ Under Part 1 of Education and Skills Act 2008 young people aged 16 and 17 who have not attained level 3 qualifications of sufficient size are under a duty to continue in education or training until the young person's 18th birthday.

² section 15ZA of the Education Act 19963

3.5 Where the local authority is unable to ascertain the provision a young person is engaged in, these are classified as Not Known.

3.6 The analysis in this report covers data from January 2022 to January 2025. Tables showing the data and its proportionality with the total cohort are attached in Appendix 1.

4. Advice and Analysis

4.1 The number of 16 and 17 year olds in Medway continues to increase, rising from 6,416 in January 2022 to an anticipated 8,516 by January 2028. This represents an increase of 2,100 students over the six-year period, approximately 32.7% growth.

4.2 The number of young people in the Year 12 cohort (16 year olds) continued to increase until Jan-24. However, the numbers are forecast to decline from Jan-26 onwards.

4.3 The number of young people in the Year 13 cohort (17 years old) continued to increase until Jan-24. This growth is forecast to continue at the same rate until 2027.

4.4 Education, Employment, and Training (EET): There has been a sustained increase in the number of young people who are EET. The number rose from 5,682 in January 2022 to a peak of 7,006 in January 2024. However, there is a noticeable decline to 6,657 by January 2025, reflecting the challenges of and changes to employment and education opportunities.

4.5 Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET): The number of young people who are NEET has also grown over 86 in January 2022 to 490 by January 2025. Significant work took place in 2023/4 to reduce the high numbers of Not Known so a rise was expected during this time, however since Sept 24 there has been a significant rise due to lack of suitable education provision.

4.6 The type of provision providing the EET has changed over the last 5 years:

— **Sixth Form:** 3,624 enrolments in January 2022, stabilising at around 3,800 in January 2023 and January 2024, before experiencing a decline to 3,654 in January 2025. This dip requires further investigation, to determine whether there is a shift in student preferences or a decline those achieving the required outcomes to progress into sixthform.

— **College:** enrolments have shown significant growth, increasing from 1,632 in January 2022 to a peak of 2,511 in January 2024. However, by January 2025, enrolments decreased to 2,198, indicating potential concerns over sustainability, suitability, and the need for retention strategies, along with analysis of cohort size and places available.

- **Full-Time Education (Other):** although low, numbers show an increase, from 9 in January 2022 to 43 by January 2025.
 - **Apprenticeships:** numbers show consistency, beginning at 177 in January 2022 and reaching a peak of 224 both in January 2023 and January 2024, before falling slightly to 218 in January 2025. This consistency signals solid interest in apprenticeship programs, although future challenges to maintain this option remain, including funding changes, lack of availability and a decline in the lower entry level opportunities.
 - **Full-Time Employment with Study:** the number of young people engaging in this option is low, fluctuating between 10 to 17 students. There are limited options for young people pursuing dual commitments of education and employment.
 - **Training:** More young people are engaged in training opportunities, growing from 58 in January 2022 to 213 in January 2025. Although this remains low as a proportion of the cohort, this growth reflects an increasing recognition of the importance of skill development and training in securing employment.
- 4.7 Employment without Training, has seen considerable growth, rising from 153 in January 2022 to 530 by January 2025. This significant increase raises concerns regarding the quality of jobs available to students and whether they are gaining the necessary skills for future employment. These young people are counted as NEET.

5. Improvements and development

- 5.1 A whole system partnership response is needed to address the challenges. A post 16 provider working group chaired by the local authority is developing a strategic plan to address the issues. The data will be used by the partnership to plan effectively for future needs. These include:
- The development of further provision and educational resources to accommodate the growing cohorts. Consideration needs to be given to how education establishments can expand class sizes, increase the breadth of their offer and enhance support systems to manage the increasing population effectively.
 - Engagement with young people to understanding their needs as the cohorts grow and change.
 - Maintaining a consistent evaluation of enrolment data, the labour market and provider offer. Implementing regular reviews of both demographic trends and educational outcomes.

- Targeted initiatives aimed at re-engagement, including vocational training, mentoring, or outreach programs focused on career pathways, to support the growing numbers of NEET young people reintegrate back into being EET
- Seeking additional resources and funding streams to ensure the development of employment services and educational programs
- Strengthening partnerships between education providers and local businesses will help create more opportunities for EET transition.

6. Risk management

- 6.1. The local authority has statutory duties as outlined in this report however the success of this is entirely dependent on collaboration and partnership working. The partnership, therefore, is subject to significant risks as outlined below:

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Reduced data collection and engagement means that early intervention for those at risk of NEET cannot be targeted effectively.	The removal of the statutory requirement for Destination data collection has led to reduced engagement with schools and diminished adherence to agreed data sharing processes.	Renewed MOU across providers. Wider publication of self-referral and parent/carer referral options.	CIII
Further reduction or no increase in suitable provision for vulnerable learners	Medway has experienced a significant reduction in available offers for vulnerable learners, particularly for those for whom sixth form and college placements are unsuitable. Much of the alternative provision was funded through the European Social Fund (ESF). After a sharp decline in 2019/20, recovery has been slow. The situation worsened in 2023 with the loss of traineeships and Employability. As a result, NACRO is currently the only training provider offering	Work with providers and the ESFA to develop a suitable offer. Start transition planning earlier (particularly for those with SEND) Develop 14-19 pathways as part of the preparation for adulthood strategy.	All

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
	Level 1 and 2 courses in Medway. Provision for the 2024/25 academic. As such, Level 2 and below opportunities being extremely limited and insufficient to meet demand.		
Decline in Key Stage 4 outcomes prevent young people progressing into desired post 16 education.	The majority of sixth forms offer predominantly Level 3 qualifications, with only about 3% of mainstream sixth forms providing Level 2 courses. While data suggests there are sufficient places. Low attainment levels and inflexibility in entry criteria have further restricted access, negatively impacting post-16 opportunities.	Schools to work to further improve Key Stage 4 outcomes. Work with schools to develop 3 year sixthform offers with foundation or pre level 3 years as a feeder to level 3 courses. Consider whether the rise in this this year is a impact of Covid on this year's cohort (missed KS3 schooling)	BII

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

7. Climate change implications

7.1 There are no climate change implications directly related to this report.

8. Financial implications

8.1 With rising costs - such as staffing - and Medway's static £300,000 grant (Information, Advice, and Guidance Grant,) the resources available are reduced along with the capacity to remove barriers and offer interim support for successful transitions into post-16 education, employment, or training. There is c£100,000 available each year for these programmes, For example, a £20,000 investment supported 40 young people through online Functional Skills Maths and English courses; another £20,000 enabled 20 young people to participate in retail swap opportunities; and £10,000 supported 12 young people in classroom-based Functional Skills sessions.

9. Legal implications

9.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Data tables

Background papers

None

Appendix 1: Data tables

Young people aged 16 and 17 in **Education, Employment and Training**

Date	Total Cohort	Total EET	% of cohort
January 2022	6416	5682	88.50%
January 2023	6724	6326	94%
January 2024	7392	7006	94.77%
January 2025	7358	6657	90.47%

Young people aged 16 and 17 in **Education**

Date	Total Cohort	Total in Education	% of cohort
January 2022	6416	5272	82%
January 2023	6724	5784	86%
January 2024	7392	6398	86.55%
January 2025	7358	5896	80.13%

Young people aged 16 and 17 in **Employment**

Date	Total Cohort	Total in Employment	% of cohort
January 2022	6416	352	5.4%
January 2023	6724	454	6.75%
January 2024	7392	477	6.4%
January 2025	7358	548	7.44%

Young people aged 16 and 17 **Not in Education, Employment and Training**

Date	Total Cohort	Total NEET	% of cohort
January 2022	6416	186	2.89%
January 2023	6724	203	3%
January 2024	7392	291	3.9%
January 2025	7358	490	6.66%

Young people aged 16 and 17 whose destination is **Not Known**

Date	Total Cohort	Total Not Known	%
January 2022	6416	548	8.5%
January 2023	6724	194	2.8%
January 2024	7392	95	1.28%
January 2025	7358	211	2.8%