



NEET and Participation Strategy.

SUMMARY

- 1.1 The city requires a strategy that provides a cohesive and systematic approach to ensuring that the numbers of young people who are engaged in recognised forms of education, training or employment (EET) when they leave school is increased.
- 1.2 Derby has a higher not in education, employment or training (NEET) figure than for neighbouring authorities and has also received recent national scrutiny regarding its figures pertaining to young people who have left school in year 11 but whose EET destinations are unknown.
- 1.3 A number of factors have impacted on this, i.e. reductions in funding (as part of cuts to Local Authority budgets) causing reductions in personnel of those engaged in the activity of reducing both NEET and unknown destination figures.

Also, in April of this year, the City moved over to a new database (it had previously shared a database with the county), which created a data lag when transporting information from the old to the new data system.

- 1.4 There is currently a wide range of activity taking place in the city in relation to engaging young people in EET, whether this is Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) staff in Schools or Personal Advisors from Connexions/located in Locality Multi-Agency Teams. However, there is not currently in place an overarching strategy to provide the direction and coordination necessary to improve performance.

A NEET and participation strategy with clear governance is required to improve performance in this area by giving a singular vision and direction, whilst holding stakeholders in the strategy to account.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To approve the implementation of the NEET and Participation strategy along with a multi-agency steering/strategy group to oversee the implementation and delivery of this strategy.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 This is a significant strategy that will have an impact on young people across the city between the ages of 14 and 19 and therefore requires approval from the city council's

executive decision making body.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 Having a coherent and senior officer backed NEET and participation strategy is vital given the potential social and financial costs of young people not being in a recognised form of EET. National research by York University suggests that there is a reasonable expectation that one in six young people who are NEET will never secure long- term employment, with the average individual lifetime public finance cost of a young person who is NEET at £56,300 equating to £12 billion across all young people who are NEET. The total associated loss to the economy, individuals and their families is just over £22 billion.
- 4.2 Derby performance in relation to both NEET and unknown destinations is below regional and national performance levels. There are NEET hotspots in the city in the following wards
- Arboretum, Normanton, Sinfin, Derwent

Performance follows an annual cycle of peaks and troughs depending on the time of the academic year and on reporting requirements. Locally, it has been impacted by reductions in funding and subsequent reductions in personnel of those engaged in the activity of reducing both NEET and unknown figures.

What is clear from local data is that Derby has very positive progression from young people leaving year 11. However, the key issue for years 12 and 13 is the retention of learners. An important element of the NEET strategy is therefore re-engaging young people who leave 16-18 education and training early and ensuring there is suitable and sufficient provision to accommodate the early leavers.

4.3 The NEET and Participation strategy aims to:

- Reduce numbers of NEET young people
- Reduce numbers of unknown destination's
- Ensure appropriate provision to meet the needs of NEET groups
- Influence the development and commissioning of provision for NEET groups
- Understand the NEET cohort and devise a performance framework to support achievement of key aims
- Diversify and open up learning with a focus on the most vulnerable
- Ensure robust and joined up communication and tracking systems are in place to support improved performance
- Develop increased multi-partner ownership of achieving the key aims of this strategy

As mentioned, clear governance arrangements will be required and it is planned that the strategy will be overseen by a multi-agency partnership group. That group would consist of representatives from

- Schools
- Derby College
- Training providers
- Derby City Council
- Job Centre Plus

The plan is for the strategy to be reviewed and updated annually as the local and national picture changes. There will also be a greater focus on performance and achievement of underpinning objectives to support the strategy in the form of an action plan and performance measures that are included in appendix 2. It is planned that the multi-agency strategy group will support the strategy by providing information/data, performance oversight, support and challenge in regular meetings.

- 4.4 The strategy outlines a range of work planned to address current deficits at various stages of a young person's journey towards and during post 16 provision. This includes ensuring all young people educated other than in school are offered a Section 139 assessment, which will provide additional support to help them make a smoother transition into post 16 provision. It is also planned for robust tools to be used to identify young people vulnerable to NEET within schools and to ensure they are targeted with additional support to make successful post 16 transitions.

A key thrust of the strategy is to ensure robust tracking of young people. This will include building on existing good practice, i.e. continuing the agreement with local providers to share their admissions lists as early as possible in the academic year this enables checks to be made into whether intended destinations and offers have been taken up and to identify young people with an unknown destination, so that they can be targeted for additional support.

Post 16 providers will continue to be provided with lists of unknown destination and NEETs once a month by the Local Authority in order for them to track and target young people, thereby helping them move into EET provision

The strategy will build upon Derby's existing partnership strengths such as its network providers meeting, which is chaired by the Connexions Centre Manager. This forum engages a network of providers to address post 16 issues across the city and is a key forum for exchange of information and initiatives.

- 4.5 The strategy uses best practice from successful authorities, such as establishing clear timeframes and responsibilities with providers, which set out the requirements to supply regular updates on both immediate destinations of young people and young people who have dropped out of education and training

Best practice systems ensure providers notify the Local Authority immediately when young people drop out of provision. The strategy outlines that Derby will utilise its existing *Managed Moves Protocol* to ensure there is a rapid response and clear lines of communication when a young person drops out of provision locally.

Best practice systems outline that effective information sharing arrangements must be in place within the Local Authority and other agencies working with young people, supported by a clear understanding by all parts of the Local Authority and partner agencies of the importance of tracking. A key strand of the strategy is ensuring all existing information sharing agreements are up to date and establishing regular internal reporting mechanisms through the strategy group and the performance measures that form part of the strategy.

4.6 The strategy recognises that however effective councils are at tracking the immediate destinations of young people post-16 and in keeping track of young people between the ages of 16 and 18 through their work with providers, other services and other councils, there are always some young people whose destinations are likely to be unknown. In these instances direct outreach to find young people will be necessary.

It is planned that NEET and unknown hot spots will be identified and shared with post 16 providers to enable them to target/track relevant young people more efficiently and effectively and where data systems are unable to provide sufficient information about the whereabouts of young people, direct outreach to find young people will be needed, with plans to use more creative and young person friendly methods of communication such as social media.

Derby recognises the need to strengthen and consolidate its tracking practice and as such a range of activity is planned:

- Embedding tracking in the role of all Connexions Personal Advisor's
- Ensuring there is a lead manager to coordinate tracking activity
- Ensuring targeted group tracking
- Using social media to track hard to reach young people

Best practicing Local Authorities continue to support young people at risk of becoming NEET after the age of 18, and have systems in place to track those young people. Figures for 18 year olds participation are also included in the NEET and Unknown figures for 16-18 year olds which DfE use when looking at Local Authority performance. Derby will continue to build on it's strong partnership with Job Centre Plus, which can help to ensure young people receive an integrated package of support, and avoid young people "falling through the cracks" at 18.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 In ensuring that a strategic and integrated approach to NEET and participation is developed, it is vital that partnership agencies involved in taking this agenda forward have a clear reference point and set of actions to work towards. Therefore, in this scenario, there appear to be few alternative options that would viably have the impact that a strategy supported (and where necessary challenged) by a multi agency strategy group is likely to have.

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer Financial officer Human Resources officer Estates/Property officer Service Director(s) Other(s)	Andrew Bunyan
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Background papers:
List of appendices:

None
Appendix 2, Action plan and performance measures.

IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

- 1.1 There are no significant financial implications at this point in time; the resources to deliver the strategy are in place already. It is a matter of utilising these resources in a more consistent and joined up way. It is hoped that success in the strategy can reduce local costs relating to out of work benefits for young people who are NEET.

Legal

- 2.1 The Local Authority completes returns to central Government on NEET and Unknown numbers as part of legal requirements and information is shared between agencies involved in this strategy following legislation (the Education and Skills Act 2008 and the Education Act 1996) and local policy/information sharing agreements.

Personnel

- 3.1 There are no implications as regards requesting additional personnel to deliver this strategy. The personnel are in place already. The strategy may become more difficult to deliver given further cuts to staffing at the Space@Connexions in April 2014.

Equalities Impact

- 4.1 The impact of the strategy should be a positive one in relation to its focus on groups who are more vulnerable to NEET, such as care leavers, children with disabilities, teenage parents, those from BME backgrounds and those involved in youth crime. The focus is on improving life chances for these groups with the resources available.

Health and Safety

- 5.1 There are no significant health and safety implications brought about by this strategy.

Environmental Sustainability

- 6.1 There are no significant environmental sustainability implications brought about by this strategy.

Property and Asset Management

- 7.1 There are no significant property and asset management implications brought about by this strategy.

Risk Management

- 8.1 There is a risk of further scrutiny from central Government brought about by any inability to reduce the numbers of unknown destinations for young people. This is likely to impact on confidence in Derby's ability to provide effective EET advice, support and guidance.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 9.1 Corporate objectives from the council plan that are linked to this strategy are:
- A thriving sustainable economy.
 - Achieving their learning potential.
 - A strong community.