

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, EDUCATION & EARLY HELP SERVICES

TO:	ADULTS SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	13 DECEMBER 2016	AGENDA ITEM:	11
TITLE:	PROGRESS WITH RAISING YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND REDUCING NEET		
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report sets out the continued progress against our ambition to increase the participation of our young people and reduce our published NEET statistic. It seeks to update Members on the recently released changes to the way that DfE tracks and records the data related to young people, and it seeks to update Members on the steps being taken to reduce the cost of the IAG service to meet the Council's need to deliver their statutory duties more effectively and efficiently.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 To note the continued progress of increasing participation of our young people and reducing the NEET statistic.
- 2.2 To note the changes to the way that DfE tracks and records data related to young people.
- 2.3 To note the steps being taken to reduce the cost of the IAG service while maintaining an effective and efficient service.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

Local Authorities 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 under the Education Act 1996.
- To fulfil this, local authorities 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 ESA 20082.

Tracking young people's participation is a key element of these duties. Local Authorities 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 Local Authority with information that will help to ensure that suitable education and training provision is available and that resources can be targeted effectively.

In addition, ESA 2008 placed two RPA-related duties on Local Authorities with regard to 16 and 17 year olds:

- Local Authorities 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.
- Local Authorities 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 local authorities to offer support as soon as possible.

4. CONTINUED PROGRESS

The 2015 DfE NEET data reported the percentage of Reading's 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training as 8.1% - a decline of 1.8% from 2014.

The 2016 DfE NEET data reported the percentage of Reading's 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training at 4.7% - an improvement of 3.4% from 2015.

2016 has seen a 2.7% improvement in 16 and 17 year olds participating in education or training rather than just moving from NEET into work with training.

It has also seen a 3.2% improvement in 16 and 17 year olds made an offer of an education place under the September Guarantee.

Activities undertaken to achieve these improvements included:

- the appointment of a 14-19 Participation Adviser, working within the Education department, who focused resource into coordinating the various activities and groups, as well as understanding and plugging the gaps in the system to reach the published targets and milestones.
- performance management, rather than contract management, of the Council's IAG provider Adviza, which resulted in a dedicated Delivery Manager being appointed for Reading to work closely with the Council to meet the targets set.
- a NEET Governance Group, with membership consisting of key decision makers from across the Council, whose responsibilities impact on the NEET agenda. This group subsequently expanded to include external partners, such as Adviza and Reading College. The Group met monthly and focused on increasing the understanding of the NEET.
- partnership working between DCEEH and Elevate Reading to establish a NEET Operational Group consisting of key front-line staff from across the Council and key

partners. This group met regularly and focused on sharing knowledge of, and agreeing interventions for young people who were AT RISK, NEET or NOT KNOWN to the authority.

- sharing of the Risk of NEET Indicators (RoNi) report with Reading College to allow them the best opportunity to plan support and focus for those students who are most at risk of becoming NEET.

5 REPORTING CHANGES

The Department for Education recently changed the reporting requirements for Local Authorities to report on its young people.

Although the changes came into effect on 1st September 2016, the annual NEET scorecard for 2015 has been released with the new system - which makes it difficult to compare to the 2014 scorecard.

From September 2016 the upper age limit of the cohort of young people to be included in the data submission is changing. Authorities will only be required to include information about young people up to the end of the academic year in which they have their 18th birthday (academic age 16 & 17 or years 12 & 13).

DfE expect existing resource levels to be maintained and refocused to ensure that all 16 and 17 year olds enter and complete a sustained positive destination after compulsory education - they expect the 16 & 17 year old NK and NEET figures to improve.

The statutory duty has not changed. LAs still have a duty under Section 68 of the Education 7 Skills Act 2008 to encourage, enable and assist young people's participation up to their 20th birthday - we just no longer need to report on the whole age group.

DfE will continue to publish key stage 5 destination measures but by using a combination of HMRC and DWP data instead. Schools will still have the obligation to provide their own destination measures for Ofsted.

From September 2016 the NEET and Not Known figures will be combined. This will be calculated by the DfE and sent back to the Authority on a monthly basis. The new combined figures will only report on years 12 & 13 (as explained above).

SEND young people will continue to be tracked and supported until their 25th birthday. DfE have recently introduced a separate data sheet on young people with an EHCP between the ages of 20 and 24.

A strategic decision has been made to replace the tracking of year-14 with the tracking of all vulnerable groups - including care leavers - until their 25th birthday. This supports our intention of more targeted intervention to ensure those young people furthest away from the labour market have effective support to re-engage.

Reading Borough Council welcomes the new combined reporting of NEET and NOT KNOWN as a way to create more equity of reporting across Local Government. We are now able to compare realistically, and favourably, with our geographical neighbours and against the England average (1% below).

6 IAG CONTRACT & COMMISSIONING PLAN

The provision for delivering our IAG statutory duty is currently provided by Adviza under a Berkshire Framework contractual agreement. The council has purchased services under this agreement until 31st March 2017. The annual contract value for Reading is £450,774.

In addition to delivering services for Reading Borough Council, the majority of Reading schools purchase IAG directly from Adviza in order to meet their own requirements.

Reading Borough Council has committed to meeting the requirement to reduce the budget by 40% from April 2017 and has produced a more targeted commissioning plan - working closely with the relevant teams within the authority. The 14-19 Participation Adviser is working closely with Adviza to meet this reduction from next year and progress is positive.

The 14-19 Participation Adviser is also working closely with Elevate to ensure that the support they provide for 16-24 year olds focuses on the young people who will be most affected by the changes to DfE reporting for 18 year olds.

It is clear that following the cessation of the Berkshire Framework agreement, Reading Borough Council needs clarity as to the long term intentions for commissioning the IAG service. A review is being conducted by the 14-19 Participation Adviser - supported by contracts, commissioning, and Elevate Berkshire - to determine the long term commissioning strategy. The strategy will include an investigation on the validity of an internal or external service and will seek to better understand the commissioning and procurement approaches of local authorities across the country.

7. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

This activity contributes to the following strategic aims from "Reading 2020": The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)¹:

- *Priority One: Skills for all:* the Productive Pathways programme is the centrepiece of work to address skills gaps, which are a key constraint on economic growth in our area. The objective is to get more young people into meaningful education, employment and training, by redesigning a fragmented service so that it puts the customer first, is visible, and fully accessible and delivers in ways that support young people who are NEET into meaningful activity as quickly as possible. We are doing this by bringing the many existing providers into a collaborative framework ('Pathways') and by involving key stakeholders to develop something that is adopted and makes a tangible difference. It is part of a wider programme to strengthen employment and skills planning, capitalising on the key developments taking place that offer significant opportunities for employment.
- *Priority Two: Learning and employment*², Reading's children and young people plan 2015 -2018 states: "All children and young people have a fair and equal chance to achieve, and have access to information to make informed decisions about their future, regardless of heritage, income or disability.

8. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

Community Engagement and information is not relevant to this report.

9. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant to this report.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

¹ <http://www.reading2020.org.uk/>

² <http://www.reading2020.org.uk/childrens-trust/children-young-people-plan/>

The activity has been developed within existing resources.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

<http://www.reading2020.org.uk/childrens-trust/children-young-people-plan/>