

TO : THE EXECUTIVE  
DATE : 11 FEBRUARY 2014

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**UPDATE ON PROVISION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT  
OR TRAINING (NEET)**

**Director of Children, Young People & Learning**

**1 PURPOSE OF DECISION**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update the Executive on the current position regarding young people Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) and to note the revised NEET strategy.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 **That the revised Bracknell Forest NEET Strategy as set out in Annex 1 be approved.**

**3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The reduction in the number of young people who are not in education, reemployment or training is a priority action for the Council.

**4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

None.

**5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

Update on work to support young people who become NEET

- 5.1 Work continues to support Bracknell Forest young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) despite a changing economic landscape. The focus of the work is based around two strands of activity; prevention and targeted support. The effectiveness of this work can be seen through a continued reduction in the number of young people who are NEET.
- 5.2 The prevention work uses the risk of NEET indicators (RONI) which are based on quantitative data held on the ONE database. This is used in conjunction with the local qualitative information held by schools who are regularly informed of those young people who potentially could become NEET. The second element of work is to engage young people into appropriate education and training. Much of this work is focused on individual young people through the work of the multi-agency participation group.
- 5.3 Bracknell Forest data at the end of October 2013 shows the percentage of NEET young people to be 4.4% (154) of the cohort. This is down on the equivalent figure for October 2012, which was 7.1% (248). This is compared to a national NEET figure for 16-18 year olds of 12.2% and increase of 1.2% on the previous year, a South East figure of 5.4% and a Berkshire average of 5.3%. This reduction has been achieved despite the continuing difficult employment market for young people. Section 5.18 provides further details of the actual numbers of young people within the NEET cohort.

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- 5.4 September 2013 also saw the introduction of the Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) but it is unclear as to whether this reduction in the NEET figure could be attributed to the new requirements around participation. Many of the young people who are NEET are categorised as participating but remain NEET due to the thresholds set for an individual to be removed from the NEET register.
- 5.5 Part of the work around supporting young people who are NEET is ensuring care leavers have secure sustainable forms of education, employment or training. Currently 30% of care leavers aged 17-19 are NEET and we are directly working with 75% of this group.
- 5.6 We have seen some volatility in our provider base but maintain excellent working relationships with all of them. During 2012/13 we have seen one of our apprenticeship providers go into administration. This did not have an impact locally as Bracknell Forest learners had completed their programmes prior to this happening. One provider offering technical IT training has withdrawn due to the changes in apprenticeship requirements. This has reduced the number of providers supporting Bracknell Forest learners from four to two. We are actively seeking new provider relationships to support young people wanting to access apprenticeship programmes.
- 5.7 Our Foundation Learning providers continue to be key stakeholders in supporting young people who require intensive accessible courses which start at various times throughout the academic year. They work with young people who are at level 2 or below and provide a range of vocational opportunities including delivering the education element of our work pairing scheme.
- 5.8 Learning to Work, formerly the Education Business Partnership, have been commissioned to support young people through a package of extended work placements. Some of these placements are funded through a commissioned service and others through the European Social Fund (ESF) where a young person meets the eligibility criteria. Students are matched to suitable employers and supported throughout the placement and into an appropriate progression route, usually further training or employment.
- 5.9 An ESF grant is being used to support Bracknell Forest young people through the BIONIC programme. This came to an end in December 2013, although a replacement through a different provider has been commissioned through a national tendering process led by the Education Funding Agency, as well as through the Youth Contract which is being delivered by Adviza for the Bracknell and Wokingham areas. While young people on these programmes remain NEET, due to the aforementioned threshold related to the number of hours on a scheme, they are categorised as participating for the purposes of RPA.
- 5.10 The LA's newly appointed Transition Coordinator is working to support a number of young people who are at risk of disengaging as they transition between Year 11 and post-16 education and training. This work is as a result of the previously DfE funded project which saw 89.1% of at risk young people continue in education, employment or training after two terms. The Coordinator is also working with our providers to ensure that young people who become NEET are identified and supported into alternative provision, usually within two weeks of becoming NEET. This highlights the needs for early intervention as we have previously found that a young person is more likely to move into alternative provision within two weeks of becoming NEET.

### Revised NEET strategy

- 5.11 The revised NEET strategy for the LA is included in Annex 1. The previous strategy was updated in 2011 and prior to that in 2007.

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- 5.12 The strategy notes the removal of national indicator NI117 which was a target for a NEET figure of less than 5%. It is now more appropriate to consider the actual number of young people in conjunction with the published NEET figures. For example Wokingham often has a smaller percentage of young people who are NEET but a higher number of actual young people due to the cohort size.
- 5.13 The strategy also suggests that the highest proportion of young people who are NEET usually have commonly identifiable characteristics such as poor educational attainment, high levels of truancy, are at risk of becoming teenage parents or have higher rates of substance misuse. Not all young people can be categorised in this way and there are a number of young people who are high attaining and, having successfully completed a level three qualification, are now unable to find sustainable employment opportunities.
- 5.14 As part of the strategy a range of interventions are identified for young people who are at risk of becoming NEET and those who are NEET. These include working with young people and where appropriate their parents, securing work placements, supporting with managing behaviour, providing impartial independent advice and guidance (IAG), securing access to a range of alternative courses of study and support through the transition from pre- to post-16 education.
- 5.15 We are starting to see a trend in Bracknell Forest of NEET young people not wishing their information to be shared. This prevents them from accessing any benefits through the Department of Work and Pensions. This does present a particular challenge in supporting them into education, training or employment if data around their aspirations or contact information cannot be shared with stakeholders. Currently Adviza are working to try and ascertain agreement from these individuals (currently 14.6% of the NEET cohort) to allow their data to be shared. A memorandum of understanding is in place between Bracknell Forest Council and the Department of Work and Pensions for the consensual sharing of information on NEET young people.
- 5.16 The proposed City Deal initiative will bring together resources from external stakeholders into a town centre location offering information advice and guidance and support to individuals aged 16-24 as they prepare for education, training or employment. As part of this new initiative a strategic approach to employer engagement will be developed ensuring that we increase the number of organisations who are able to support young people through work placements, traineeships, work pairing, mentoring, apprenticeships and employment. Subject to joint committee approval this programme will commence in Spring 2014.

### Trend Over time

- 5.17 As noted in 5.3, over the past 12 months we have seen a reduction of 2.7% in NEET figures from 7.1% to 4.4%. This represents an ongoing trend of declining figures over the past two years and has been as a result of the early interventions which have been put in place.
- 5.18 Trend data also illustrates a shift with historically 50% of our young people remaining NEET for over 6 months. This has changed in the past two years to a position where less than a third of our young people are NEET for more than 6 months. We continue to work with young people to reduce this figure further. These figures however mask details of the categories of young people who form our NEET group.
- 5.19 Of the 4.4% (which represents an adjusted NEET figure, taking into consideration the assumption that a proportion of the not known young people will be NEET) 135 young people (3.8%) are actually NEET. Of these only 100 are available for education, employment or training. The other 35 are not available, most of whom will

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be the individuals forming the 6 month plus NEET category. Categories for not available are limited to pregnancy, within 13 weeks of giving birth, long term illness or being in custody.

**6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

Borough Solicitor

6.1 The relevant legal provisions are addressed within the main body of the report.

Borough Treasurer

6.2 As relevant actions in the strategy will be planned within available resources, the Borough Treasurer is satisfied that no significant financial implications arise from this report.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

The local authority has a responsibility to ensure that suitable opportunities are available young people.

Background Papers

*Annex 1      Bracknell Forest (2013/14 Revised) NEET Strategy*  
*Annex 2      Case Studies*

Contact for further information

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## Annex 1

### BRACKNELL FOREST (2013/14 Revised) NEET STRATEGY

This strategy is a revision of the 2011/12 approved version.

#### Timeline

Group	When	Signed off
DMT		
Participation Group		
Secondary (11-18) Partnership		

#### Prepared by:

**Steve Lambert**  
Head of Post-16 Education, Training and Skills

#### Linked strategies and policies:

1. Bracknell Forest Raising of the Participation Age strategy

# **BRACKNELL FOREST (Revised November 2013) NEET STRATEGY**

## **1.1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF THE STRATEGY**

This strategy supports the participation of young people in Bracknell Forest who are not in education employment or training (NEET). This paper also highlights a range of strategies and actions that need to be adopted to reduce the numbers of NEET young people in the Borough and improve the outcomes. The Strategy is supported by an Action Plan.

## **1.2 The Bracknell Forest Secondary (11-18) Partnership has;**

- 1 noted and considered the issues relating to NEET in the Borough**
- 2 noted and considered the range and type of activities that could be employed to reduce the number of young people who become NEET**
- 3 approved a range of overarching strategic actions for reducing NEET numbers within Bracknell Forest.**

## **2. BACKGROUND**

2.1 The government has aspirations that all young people participate in education, employment or training as identified in its raising of the participation age (RPA) guidance. As a result of the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act (2009) from April 2010 accountability for 'securing enough sufficient education and training' post-16 passed to the local authority.

2.2 While there is no national target the Department for Education suggests that a NEET figure of less than 5.0% represents good local practice. Historically NEET figures were agreed within the NI 117 indicator but this is no longer in place. Current data shows that Bracknell Forest has a NEET level of 4.4% (Oct 2013) representing 140 young people aged 16-18, of which 108 are available to participate in education, employment or training.

2.3 To reduce this figure yet further a number of measures need to be implemented which may take time to achieve results.

2.4 NEET figures follow a cyclical trend, which links to the academic year and changes in the labour market, showing variation from month to month. Even when figures appear to be static over a period, membership of the NEET group does not remain fixed. In any given month, some young people will move into education, employment or training, whereas others will become NEET.

2.5 Evidence suggests that the characteristics associated with those who are NEET are as follows, with the highest proportion of young people having low attendance, exclusion and low academic achievement.

- Poor educational attainment
- Persistent truancy
- Teenage Pregnancy
- Drugs and alcohol abuse
- Looked After Children
- Disability
- Mental health
- Crime and anti-social behaviour
- Poor Careers Education, Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG).

2.6 As there are a range of organisations involved in reducing NEET, any planned actions

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should be collaborative, coordinated, comprehensive and cost effective.

2.7 These actions will be overseen by the 'Participation Group', reporting to the Secondary (11-18) Partnership.

### 3. PROPOSALS

3.1 Action needs to be taken to move more young people who are currently NEET into EET and, critically, to prevent those of statutory school age from becoming NEET in the first place.

3.2 Meeting the challenge means actions in the following key areas:

- Pre-16 NEET prevention
- The transition into further education, training and employment post-16
- Enabling factors
- Partnership commitment and action

#### 3.2.1 Pre-16

It is possible to identify and target young people who are at risk of becoming NEET at an early stage in their school careers by looking at patterns of behaviour and attainment. This is increasingly being done during years 8 and 9 through specific intervention projects (Energize); as well as at the start of Year 11.

These students need:

- Access to learning opportunities which will motivate them, provide appropriate skills recognition of achievement and opportunities for progression e.g. vocational learning, work placements (both standard and extended)
- A programme of core and life skills which challenges the culture of low aspirations
- Literacy and numeracy support
- An opportunity to gain qualifications in the above areas
- Access to impartial information, advice guidance and support to make appropriate choices
- Access to work related learning to develop skills for employment
- Support with managing personal and social issues

To support the above, schools need to:

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- Take a lead in supporting pre-NEET activities and interventions in order to minimise the number of at risk young people becoming NEET.
- Take responsibility for young people who are at risk of becoming NEET and work with interested parties to ensure that opportunities are in place to ensure young people remain engaged in education and training.
- Use the Risk of NEET Indicators (RONI) for the early identification of young people at risk of becoming NEET and to work with interested parties to ensure that the appropriate interventions are put in place and monitored.

### 3.2.1 The transition into further education, training and employment post-16

For many young people progression into further education and training at the end of year 11 is a realistic option, hindered only by the transition from a largely structure school environment to one which facilitates a greater level of independence. Our part in a DfE funded RPA project around supporting young people at-risk of disengagement through the transition process saw 89.1% of supported young people continue in education after two terms. This work has emphasised the importance of the transition process and underpins the work of our transition worker.

#### Priorities for Action

- To gain commitment from all schools, Bracknell & Wokingham College and independent training providers to reducing their contribution to the NEET figures
- To continue to review and develop 14-19 curriculum provision with an emphasis on the breadth and volume of provision for young people who fail to reach level 2
- To identify those young people in Year 11 who are most vulnerable and to provide the appropriate coordinated support and access to appropriate and timely interventions
- To seek and act on the views of NEET and potentially NEET young people
- To challenge the culture of low aspirations and low value placed on lifelong learning, education and training amongst certain groups of young people
- To provide quality advice and guidance for young people
- To increase the range of appropriate training and employment opportunities available
- To provide quality support for the transition at 16 for vulnerable young people.
- Ensure that appropriate learner information is shared between providers. Individual providers can agree the level of detail pertaining to learners but the Common Transfer File should be used as a basis of these discussions.
- Use resources accompanying the City Deal initiative to increase the number of employers taking on young people into programmes leading to sustainable employment.

### 3.2.3 Enabling factors



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Research has identified that a key barrier to moving young people from NEET to EET is the thinking and behaviour of young people. A common characteristic among the NEET group is their negative perception of school<sup>1</sup>. Many believe that success is due to luck and not effort. As a result they tend to live in the present, unable to plan for the future. They may be unwilling to try new learning experiences and may not even see the connection between the need to gain qualifications and their aspirations for employment and their future.<sup>2</sup>

Research and experience suggests that support from a trusted adult is one of the key factors in engaging children and young people.

The following approaches are particularly successful:

- **Supporting clients through advocacy** - access to skilled Personal Advisers and key worker/mentoring services can help young people assess their needs, plan action and provide continuity through key transition points, and extra support during setbacks. This complements the guidance available from within schools and colleges. A range of specialist services provides support to particular groups of vulnerable young people such as young parents, those with mental health issues and young people in care.
- **Involvement of young people in service design** - many assumptions are made about what young people need; the most effective approaches are informed by client views. Work needs to be done to engage the views of young people and Adviza in developing services to young people.
- **Focusing on transition** - young people should be supported to move to the next progression point as quickly as possible. We should ensure that the drop out from both learning programmes and employment is minimised through appropriate support targeted at those most vulnerable. Considerable emphasis is placed on the transition from primary to secondary school but the same is not afforded from secondary to post sixteen education, employment or training<sup>3</sup>.
- **Offering an integrated menu of programmes with flexibility in programme length, duration and progression** – a clear range of programmes are needed to enable this diverse group to succeed. These need to take into account changing behaviour as well as skills development, with flexible entry requirements and clear outcomes linked to progression.
- **Engaging Employers** – employers need to be consulted on how best to support NEET young people and, in particular, what structures are needed to help employers recruit more young people.
- **Demonstrating clear evidence of impact** – together with the hard impact measures and targets relating to NEET, other measures should be developed to measure “distance travelled” by young people.

### 3.2.4 Partnership Commitment and Action

The Secondary (11-19) Partnership is committed to working with all the agencies involved with NEET, particularly Adviza, Training Providers and the Youth Service. The

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<sup>1</sup> Provision for Young People not in Education, Training and Employment (NEET), Research Report, June 2005. Prof Paul Croll and Alun Davies

<sup>2</sup> The Thinking and Behaviour of Young Adults (aged 16-15). Social Exclusion Unit 2005

<sup>3</sup> Evangelous, M. Taggart, B. Sylva, K. Melhuish, E. Sammons, P. Siraj-Blatchford, I. 2008. What makes a successful transition from primary to secondary school. London: Institute for Education research report EPPSE3-14.

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Education Funding Agency has responsibility for funding for NEETs; however, some of this funding may come from the European Social Fund. Collectively stakeholders will work to maximise the available funding to support Bracknell Forest young people in moving from NEET to EET. The Partnership must be aware of the needs of the additional provision and support required. The Secondary (11-19) Partnership will drive forward collaborative action through its schools and the Participation Group, to develop joined up holistic services for these young people. The Partnership will identify an appropriate grouping of school/college leaders to manage the proposed action at institution level.

### **4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

4.1 The NEET Strategy contributes to the Children and Young People's Plan key aims:

- OP1: Raise levels of attainment and pupil progress across all phases of learning for all pupils
- OP4: Improve outcomes for all children and young people, especially the more vulnerable

4.2 By addressing the issue of NEETs within Bracknell Forest the numbers engaged in education and training will be increased, contributing to the LA's '*Raising of the Participation Age*' strategy.

4.3 Through providing improved opportunities and support to vulnerable young people, social inclusion and equality will be promoted throughout the Borough. This should in turn lead to a reduction in anti-social behaviour and offending.

### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Actions should be planned within the existing budget allocations.

5.2 Alternative sources of funding as appropriate and as available will be sought for particular projects, such as the European Social Fund and Education Funding Agency grant funding.

5.3 Work with providers should be ongoing to ensure that curriculum initiatives are sustainable using conventional post-16 funding methodologies.

## Annex 2

### Case Studies

*In November a local further education college gave the phone number of the LA Transition Worker to the mother of a young person who was about to drop out of college.*

*The transition worker met with the young person on several occasions to help him to work out what it was he wanted to do (sales) and what it was about College that was not right.*

*Support was provided in producing a relevant CV and the young person signed up to the National Apprenticeship website. Together we found a few apprenticeships that were relevant and the one the young person really wanted was at a shop in Bracknell.*

*A discussion was had with the shop owner asking them about the kind of employee they were looking for and any specific tasks that they employee would be expected to do.*

*The young person was interested and have now commenced their retail apprenticeship and both employer and employee are very happy.*

*In November we had a request from the Early Years team who wished to offer a Business Administration apprenticeship.*

*Working with the team we identified a suitable young people who was NEET and who wished to work in an office setting.*

*The young person was supported in preparing a CV and application form and as a result was shortlisted and interviewed.*

*The young person was offered a level 2 apprenticeship in Business Admin and is due to start shortly.*