

TO : EXECUTIVE
DATE : 23 JUNE 2015

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

Director, 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 agree revisions to the NEET Strategy and Action Plan.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report outlines the range of interventions that have either been introduced or further developed to support young people that are not in a form of education, employment or training. This remains a key area of focus for the Council and a number of positive outcomes have been noted as a result.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 **NOTE the progress made in reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training**
- 3.2 **AGREE the updated version of the Bracknell Forest NEET Strategy and Action Plan as set out in Appendix 1.**

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure that the Bracknell Forest NEET Strategy and Action Plan continues to focus on the ongoing reduction in the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training, which is a priority action for the Council.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 None.

6 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Current achievements and initiatives

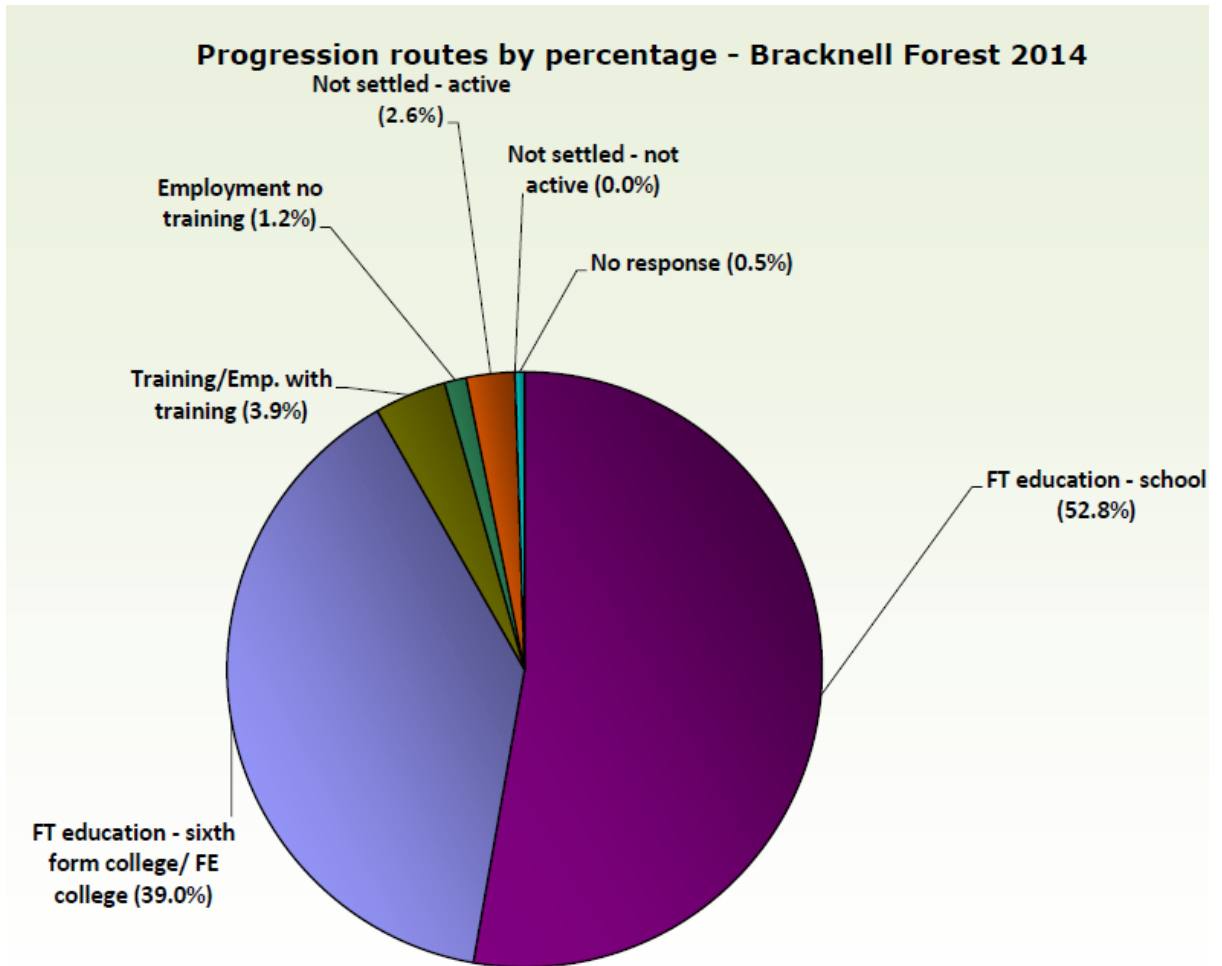
- 6.1 On-going work continues in Bracknell Forest to support young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). The focus of the work is based around two strands of activity; prevention and targeted support. The effectiveness of this work can be seen through the low NEET levels, and the range of options available to young people to meet their different levels of need as well as the take up of these services.
- 6.2 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 and working together we can identify those young people who potentially could become NEET. The second element of work is to support young people into appropriate education and training. Much of this work is

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focused on individual young people through the work of the multi-agency participation group.

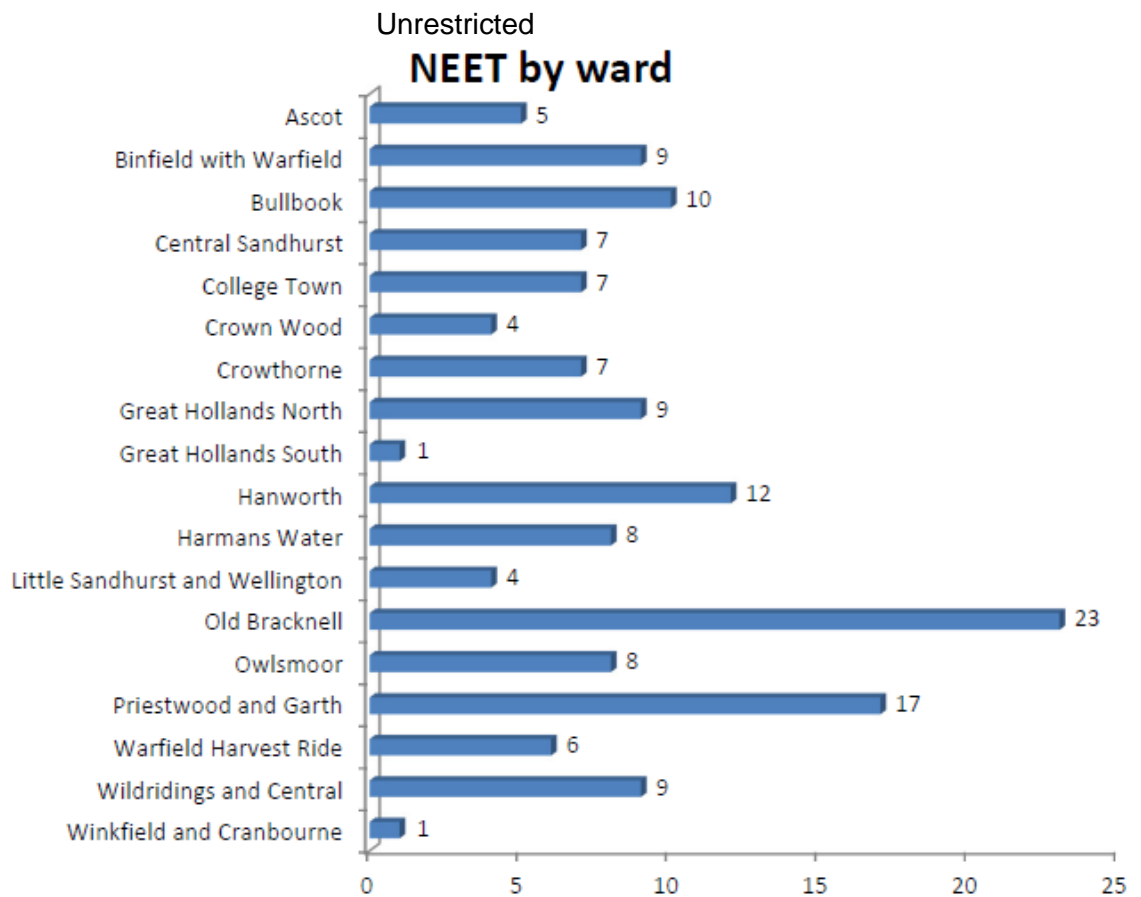
- 6.3 The national NEET figure for 16-24 year olds is 13.6%, a decrease of 1.6% on the previous year with a South East figure of 11.7%, which represents a decrease of 0.4%. Bracknell Forest performs exceptionally well against this indicator with data at the end of February 2015 showing the percentage of NEET young people to be **3.77% (cohort: 132)**. This is a decrease from **4.2% (144)** on the equivalent figure for February 2014.
- 6.4 Adviza deliver a major part of our service to young people who are NEET in Bracknell Forest. They provide information, advice and guidance services to 13-19 year olds (and up to 25 for those with learning difficulties or disabilities) to help them progress successfully into education, employment and training. In addition to this they are also commissioned to collect various strands of data and share information with partner agencies to inform and develop practice and service offers for young people.
- 6.5 A number of different destinations are taken up by those in Year 11. This forms part of the September guarantee which is a statutory obligation on all Local Authorities to provide education and training to all 16- and 17-year-olds and to support young people to find a suitable place. The September Guarantee helps local authorities to fulfill these duties, working with their partners - particularly schools and colleges - to agree how the process will work in their local area. A crucial part of this offer is that it should be appropriate to the young person's needs and may be in a school, college or in work-based learning. This could also be for part-time education where the young person is combining education with full-time employment or voluntary work. 94.1% of 16 – 17 year olds had a guaranteed place of education, employment or training for September 2014 which was an increase of 1.1% on the September 2013 figure. Data from approximately 1.2% 16 – 17 year olds is yet to be verified. This chart provides a summary of this activity:

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The "Not Settled" category includes those that are either NEET and/or in a part time destination.

6.6 The numbers of NEET young people are spread across the borough. There are however certain wards where the numbers are marginally higher than others. This reflects the wards identified in the JSNA as having the highest levels of need, as identified through the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) scores.



- 6.7 To support care leavers in making appropriate education choices the remit of the Virtual School was extended in April 2014 to reflect this commitment. Each Care Leaver is supported at the point of transition from Key Stage 4 to post 16 by a member of the Virtual School. This is coordinated by a member of the Virtual School and information is shared with relevant colleagues. It was felt that young people benefit more from having direct and prompt access to specialist advice and support when needed. This has led to a 71% increase in the number of children in care/Care Leavers in a form of education, employment or training over the past two years (2012 = 24, 2014 = 41). As part of our continued commitment to support Care Leavers, the Council is also developing plans to 'ring fence' some apprenticeships for Care Leavers. On-going planning discussions are taking their varied needs into account to ensure there is an equality of opportunity as well as outcome.

Example of NEET Prevention Actions

There is a wide range of successful preventative work in place.

- 6.8 **The Work Pairing Programme** has had a significant impact on securing sustainable education, employment and training for the most vulnerable young people in the borough. The model used is one which can be replicated in other local authority areas offering the potential to generate revenue from other authorities buying into the programme.
- 6.9 Work Pairing aims to help those young people who are motivated and have an ideal career in mind. It enables them to gain relevant experience in the work place which helps them to secure further employment. Work Pairing results in experience on their CV, a reference and contacts in the occupational field they want to enter. They contact local employers to support a young person for 2 days a week for 3 months. There is no financial obligation for the employer, the training provider and local council cover all expenses. Both the employer and young person receives weekly support throughout the work pairing and after the 3 month programme.

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- 6.10 In order to be accepted on the course the young people have to do the following (all with assistance and support):
1. Create a Curriculum Vitae
 2. Fill out the application form
 3. Research employers they would like to work for and bring the list along to his/her interview
 4. Have an interview with Transition Co-ordinator
 5. Agree to the Code of Conduct
- 6.11 This ensures peace of mind for the employer but also increases the chances of the young person securing a positive outcome. Through experience in the work place and the basic skills provision on a Friday the young people learn how to progress in the workplace – how to behave, how to settle in and how to work with others, it builds their confidence and their aspirations. The employer gets a motivated young person and a chance to employ young people without the stress and time of the recruitment process. On the 3rd day the young people carry out English, Maths and Employability Skills in order that they achieve the necessary skills to ensure these are not a barrier on their route to employment. A case study is included at Appendix 2.
- 6.12 The impact of Work Pairing is evident through these statistics:
1. 100% success rates in functional skills exams.
 2. 90% of participants secure sustainable education, employment or training as a result of the programme.
 3. Of the 10% who did not secure a positive outcome as an immediate result of the programme, 66% of this group are NEET (Not available) due to health issues and the other 33% are being supported through Adviza.
 4. 100% of participating young people say that they would recommend the programme to a friend.
 5. 75% indicated other additional benefits that we had not predicted; increased confidence and social skills (from working with employers) but also a new network of friends all of whom are in work and wanting to go on to secure positive outcomes.
- 6.13 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. Learning to work brings business to education and have established strong links with the local community as well as with schools, businesses and organisations. One of their successful preventative projects is run in schools to help students at risk to re-engage with education and decide about options for the future. This usually includes an extended work experience placement which is monitored by staff from Learning to Work throughout for around 12 weeks.
- 6.14 **Transition Work.** The Transition coordinator works with a number of young people who are at risk of disengaging as they transition between Year 11 and post-16 education and training. A key part of her role is to enable the young person to be more proactive in wanting to change current life patterns rather than do it for them. The Transition Coordinator focuses on a young person's strengths and aspirations and uses this as leverage to allow them to see their potential and success. As well as supporting the transition of the most vulnerable Year 11's, she also runs the Work Pairing. The Transition Coordinator also ensures that all Post-16 providers within the

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borough are working together to achieve the best possible results for those young people at risk of disengagement.

- 6.15 We have negotiated a pilot programme with colleagues from Bracknell Forest Youth Service to deliver the **Duke of Edinburgh's bronze award**. The main objectives of the programme are for participants to develop greater self-esteem and confidence, to encourage aspiration and to embark on a journey involving reflection and self-awareness of their own success and that of their peers. This is mainly intended for those young people that are NEET but due to various other reasons are also at risk of remaining NEET for a prolonged period of time. A number of young people have been identified who are now in the initial stages of being enrolled on the programme. There are a number of benefits for the young people and they will be developing a range of basic skills such as:
1. Communication with others, team work, problem solving.
 2. Transitional skills that can be used to gain employment.
 3. Take part in activities that provide interest and reference points to discuss at interviews
 4. Confidence building
 5. Life Skills: Budgeting money management/ Numeracy route cards, Menu planning, cooking, and shopping for food.
 6. Route planning- how to use maps, use of public transport.
 7. Researching and booking activities.
 8. First aid- accreditation may be available
 9. Develop fitness/ awareness of a healthy lifestyle and opportunity to be active.
 10. Experience a rural environment
 11. Able to take 'safe' risks as part of an expedition which will assist developing risk awareness.
- 6.16 Being part of this programme provides time to work on additional expedition training and other soft skill such as confidence building, self-esteem, and communication. There will also be a focus on employability as a result of the experiences gained. For volunteering, each week participants will be involved with a conservation project. Parks and Countryside have 'in principle' agreed to this. The goal is to have a project with a final finished product that will create a sense of worth, pride and ownership. All young people who complete the Bronze Award will also be invited to the annual Duke of Edinburgh presentation evening to receive their award. This will be planned towards the end of 2015. A follow on Silver programme will also be available should this be relevant for individuals otherwise there will be the opportunity to look at other options that may lead to a form of education, employment or training thereby building on the skills they would have gained.
- 6.17 The Council-led project, **Elevate Bracknell Forest**, is part of the Thames Valley Berkshire City Deal. The main aim of this project is to address the skills gaps, unemployment and underemployment of the borough's 16-24 year old population in order to maximise the impact of the councils collective investment as well as stimulate growth in this important economic area.
- 6.18 Despite a high performing economy, Thames Valley Berkshire has not been sheltered from the impact of recession: Youth unemployment and long term youth unemployment rose following the financial crisis.
- 6.19 With a recovering economy, the number of unemployed young people has decreased in the past years. Aside from the above mentioned decrease in NEET figures the number of JSA claimants aged between 18 and 24 years in Bracknell Forest has fallen in the last years from 345 claimants in August 2012 to 105 claimants in April 2015.

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- 6.20 While this appears on face value to present a positive picture, when it is studied more carefully it reflects that the number of young claimants has gone down even though youth unemployment of 16-24 year olds across Berkshire has increased over the last 12 months. The figures below are the results of an analysis by the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP which illustrate this disparity. With the introduction of stricter rules and most recently the announcement of the introduction of Universal Credit these developments are likely to amplify this trend.

Figure 1. JSA claimant count unemployment (18-24 year olds)

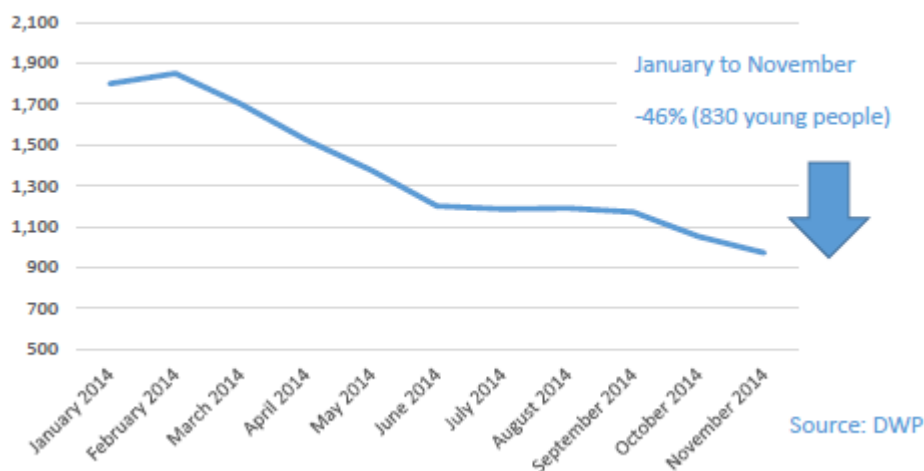
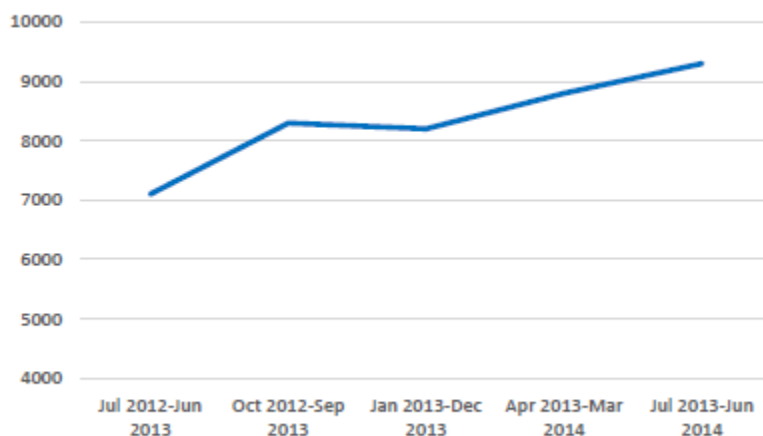


Figure 3. Total unemployment (16-24 year olds)



Source: Annual Population Survey, Office for National Statistics

- 6.21 Bracknell Forest Elevate project will work towards an overall reduction of the number of NEET's and unemployed young people in Bracknell Forest with a focus on those most at risk. To give all young people in Bracknell Forest the best possible start in life of meaningful employment Elevate Bracknell Forest intends to address the issues and barriers faced by young people by working collaboratively with agencies and organisations as well as employers locally and in the wider context of Thames Valley Berkshire.
- 6.22 Elevate Bracknell Forest is also a good example of collaborative work focused to support NEET young people. In its first year Elevate Bracknell Forest working with the LA and existing partners together achieved the following:

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- Well established partnership: 6 main partners have signed the MoU and 3 Council departments are involved in the delivery of Elevate
- Well established network of secondary partners / providers including Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Bracknell Forest Homes, Family Nurse Partnership, Involve etc.
- Elevate Me Bracknell Forest has been launched in December 2014, analysis shows a steady increase of visitors, work has been commissioned to improve the reporting structure, remove analytics bias and establish a tailored digital marketing strategy
- An interim co-located Elevate Hub has been established in January 2015
- Summary of target achievement for the Cabinet Office through the partnership and the Hub:
 - 204 NEET / unemployed young people received intensive information, advice and guidance sessions
 - 49 NEET young people took part in work experience
 - 26 NEET young people started an apprenticeship
 - 6 young people that have started an apprenticeship have sustained this (please note that not all 26 starts are counted here as obviously not all of the 26 starters have reached the 6 month measure point yet)
 - 163 NEET young people have started employment
 - 49 that have entered employment have sustained their employment for at least 6 months (please note that not all 163 starts are counted here as obviously not all of the starters have reached the 6 month measure point yet)
 - 207 former NEETs saw a 10% increase in salary

- 6.23 Additionally the ElevateMe website launched in December 2014 (<http://bracknellforest.elevateme.org.uk/>) aims to provide an IT platform for young people to access information and signposting in accordance with the overarching Elevate aims and objectives. Accessible by phone, tablet and PC the website is an integrated part of Elevate Bracknell Forest and a tool for advisers to use with their clients.
- 6.24 The project aims to have implemented a multi-organisational change by 2016/2017. To ensure this change is being developed further and adapted to the economy and labour market climate in the years to come, continued progression and multi-agency collaborative work as well as the upkeep of the IAG hub and the website are key objectives for Elevate.
- 6.25 The project is currently funded until 2016/2017 with plans to make it sustainable (either through partner contributions, involvement of businesses or other funding streams) after this time.
- 6.26 **Independent Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG).** One of the key areas of focus for our service is to ensure that students across our secondary schools (especially those making plans for after their Year 11 exams) have a clear understanding of courses, qualifications and the various progression routes that are available to them. Not only is there a statutory obligation on schools to provide this but there is also an expectation that this advice is independent and gives the student a balanced view of options across training, education or employment that are available to them. As a result, it is expected that careers guidance will not be provided only by a teacher employed or engaged at the school, or any other person employed at the school. Adviza are commissioned to deliver IAG across Bracknell Forest secondary schools. They carry out face to face careers interviews with young people, are Level 6 qualified Careers Advisers and are a Matrix accredited organisation. The work that Adviza does enables young people, particularly those that are at risk of being disengaged to have an opportunity to fulfil their ambitions and achieve their career and learning potential. This is done by helping them to develop

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their knowledge, skills and attitudes to make effective decisions and transitions. Colleagues from Adviza are present in schools at crucial progression points, including Key Stage 4, sixth form, exam results and enrolment days. They also carry out additional activities such as mock interview days which have proven to be popular with young people and schools alike. In addition the Council has organised an excellent annual careers fair, with good attendance by businesses, to provide independent information for young people and their parents/carers.

- 6.27 A concerted investment has been made to provide an effective service for those young people who have a **Learning Difficulty or Disability (LDD)** and are between 16 – 19 years old. This includes attendance at Year 9 reviews for those young people with a statement of special educational needs as well as individual guidance for each young person in advance of their Year 9 and Year 11 reviews. 1-2-1 Guidance and completion of Preparing for Adulthood template is also carried out for each Post 16 leaver. The Preparing for Adulthood templates are used by the councils Assessment Co-ordinators in the drafting of Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCP) for all those requiring one. Currently this is mainly just for those young people moving onto college although by 1st April 2018 all statements will need to be have been transferred to EHCP's. Adviza have also been commissioned to liaise with local colleges to ensure that all those moving to college in September 2015 have an appropriate placement specified on their EHCP by the 31st May 2015 as required by the DfE for 2015 leavers. This service is aimed at ensuring young people who have an LDD are either in an educational programme that meets their individual needs or are guided towards appropriate employment and training opportunities. In addition to this process young people with special educational needs (SEN) aged 16 - 19 can also visit Adviza's town centre office for support in the transition to further education (including apprenticeships), training or employment up until their 20th birthday. There is also an amount of resource available to provide a more intensive service such as outreach activities such as accompanying a young person with SEN on a college visit, job interviews etc.
- 6.28 There are also 2 DfE funded projects available to certain young people in Bracknell with SEN:
- appropriate young people in education may be able to be referred to the SEND Work Experience project
 - young people with SEN and their parents can be referred to the Independent Support service for help through the transfer of the statement to an EHCP.

Those that meet thresholds set by the project are identified between the council and Adviza. Increasing the number of young people with LDD in suitable employment is a clear focus for the Council.

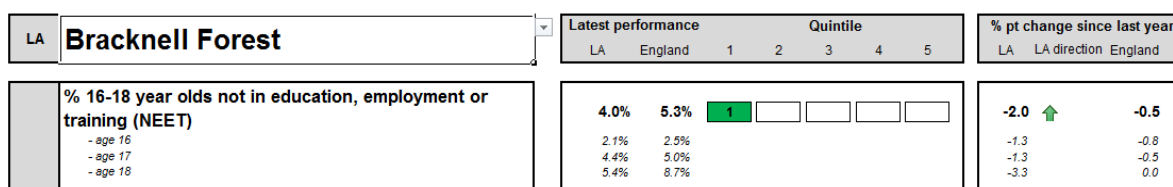
- 6.29 As noted in 6.3, there has been a decrease of 0.43% in NEET figures from 4.2% to 3.77% which we are pleased to report. However, this should be considered in light of a relatively small cohort and the impact this has on statistics. A figure below 5% is considered to be a good target to maintain.
- 6.30 We are pleased with the successes our strategy has demonstrated on NEET reduction. A further challenge that continues to be addressed is the number of young people that remain NEET for over 6 months. From the current cohort, 19% (23 out of 132) have been NEET for more than 6 months which is a decrease of 15% from the figure for February 2013 (47 out of 144). We continue to work with young people to reduce this figure further. The longer a young person is NEET the harder they are to reengage.

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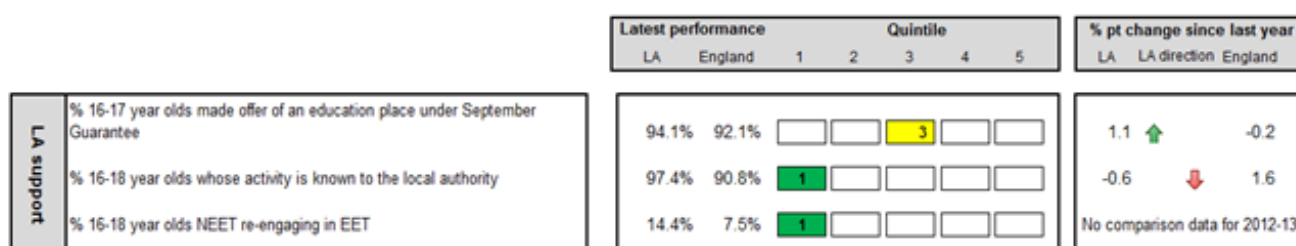
- 6.31 67.6% of 19 – 21 year old Care Leavers are recorded to be in a form of education, employment or training (Dec 2014). This is an increase of 7% on the same figure from 12 months ago. We continue to work to improve on this figure.
- 6.32 Of the 3.77% (132) young people that are NEET, 118 are available for education, employment or training. The other 14 are not available, most of whom will 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. This means that these young people are not ready to engage with the range of support that is available to them.
- 6.33 NEET scorecards were published by the DfE in December 2014 for Local Authorities across the UK. These provide information about young people's participation and attainment in education, employment or training in a single publication and were aimed to put the local authorities' NEET figures into context by setting them alongside a range of other related information. The scorecard allows local authorities and their partners to monitor their own performance and compare it with that of others.

NEET Scorecard

Experimental version - published December 2014



- 6.34 Young people are measured according to their academic age; i.e. their age on 31 August. It shows what proportion of 16 to 18 year olds living in each area were not in education, employment or training at the end of the year. Reducing figures across 16, 17 and 18 year olds represents a positive trend for the borough which was the second lowest across all Berkshire Local Authorities.



- 6.35 This indicator shows how effective the arrangements are in each area for tracking young people's participation in education or training. Whilst we as the local authority are responsible for tracking, we do depend on schools, colleges and other partners who work with young people sharing information with us. All 16 and 17 year olds are guaranteed an offer, by the end of September, of a place in education or training. There are some young people who have not yet made a decision about what they want to do next, have other plans, or who refuse contact. These young people are at risk of becoming NEET. Across all Berkshire Local Authorities we were ranked 3rd for the number of 16 – 17 year olds who were offered an education place under the September guarantee, 2nd for the number of 16 – 18 year olds whose activity were known to us and 1st for the number of 16 – 18 year olds (NEET) re-engaging in a form of education, employment or training.

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	Latest performance		Quintile					% pt change since last year		
	LA	England	1	2	3	4	5	LA	LA direction	England
Outcomes	% 16-17 year olds participating in education and training									
	- full-time education									
	- apprenticeships									
	- other education and training									
	90.9%	90.3%			3			3.7	↑	1.4
	81.9%	83.2%						-0.3		-0.6
	5.3%	4.2%						1.6		0.6
	3.7%	2.9%						2.4		1.4
	% 19 year olds achieving level 3									
	58.3%	56.2%		2				-2.4	↓	1.2
	% 19 year olds achieving GCSE A*-C English and maths between ages 16 and 19									
	14.9%	16.3%				4		-13.6	↓	-2.0

6.36 This indicator shows the proportion of 16 and 17 year olds (academic age) who live in the local authority area who were in education or training at the end of March. There is a breakdown of the three main routes that young people choose:

- full time education
- apprenticeship
- other education and training (this includes part time education, work based learning and employment with accredited training)

It also relates to pupils who were educated in the state sector at the age of 16.

6.37 Further research is going to be carried out into the causes of young people falling into the NEET category. The challenges around those young people between the ages of 16 and 19 year achieving meaningful qualifications which could lead to employment opportunities is one area in particular. Other Local Authorities across Berkshire perform better than Bracknell Forest in this area and it will be prudent to gain greater insight to the different strategies and services that have been developed to enable this to happen. The support around transition (from post 16), provision from schools, colleges and other local area providers as well as those services that we commission to meet the needs of various groups of young people all need to be considered.

Updated NEET Strategy

6.38 Underpinning the work on addressing our NEET level is the updated NEET strategy and action plan included in Appendix 1. The previous strategy was updated in 2011 and prior to that in 2007.

6.39 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.

6.40 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 employment opportunities.

6.41 As part of the strategy an increased focus is given to those young people who have a learning difficulty or disability (LDD) and are experiencing challenges in moving into supported employment. The work of key partners and our collaborative effort with educational settings to ensure that such young people are in an education programme that meets needs are outlined here. This also includes working with young people who have a LDD and where appropriate their parents/carers, securing work placements, support with managing behaviour, providing impartial independent

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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.

- 6.42 A concern raised by our partner agencies is the slight increase in the number of Bracknell Forest 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% (18) 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.

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 The Borough Treasurer is satisfied that the strategy and action plan can be delivered from within the current approved budget.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

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

Background Papers

Appendix 1 Strategy and Action Plan for reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training (2015 – 18)

Appendix 2 Case Study

Contact for further information

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