

People Select Committee
Review of Post 16 Education
Outline Scope

Scrutiny Chair (Project Director): Marilyn Surtees Paul Weston (vice chair)	Contact details: m.surtees@stockton.gov.uk paul.weston@stockton.gov.uk
Scrutiny Officer (Project Manager): Michelle Gunn	Contact details: Michelle.gunn@stockton.gov.uk
Departmental Link Officer: Vanessa Housley	Contact details: Vanessa.housley@stockton.gov.uk
PMO Aishah Waithe	Contact details: Aishah.waithe@stockton.gov.uk

Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

The topic of Post 16 Education directly addresses Priority one: The best start in life to achieve big ambitions Key Move Giving children and young people the best possible start, in an inclusive community where everyone can thrive, as it includes the action to work with Schools and Post-16 providers to increase the number of children and young people in Education, Employment and Training at ages 16 – 18 years, helping to grow their ambitions and meeting the needs of local employers.

What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?

There is a strong Post 16 offer in Stockton-on-Tees, with five providers offering a range of courses and qualifications to fulfil a variety of different passions and career aspirations. Achievement for young people at the end of their Post 16 Education is growing rapidly with a higher than national average A Level pass rate across the Borough of 97.7%.

However, enrolment figures for in Borough providers have been impacted in recent years with more Stockton-on-Tees students choosing to attend out of Borough providers in Middlesborough and Darlington, who offer similar courses. Only one out of Borough provider beats In Borough A Level A*-B outcomes.

A survey of Young People approaching the end of Year 11 by the Careers team, asking about their readiness for leaving school, found that 13.1% of students had not had a careers discussion at all in advance of sitting their GCSEs. A further 18.1% of students surveyed said they had not made a clear decision about their next steps after school. These findings suggest that Stockton students are largely unaware of the current offer available to them and improvements are needed to the existing communications strategy to effectively reach the providers target audience.

While the number of students completing Post 16 Education is growing, with an increase of over 300 students over 5 years, statistics show that a small minority of 16-17 year olds in the Borough are at risk of or have become NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) since beginning

Key Stage 5. Economic inactivity significantly impacts upon an individual's economic growth potential and is often associated with an increased likelihood of involvement in antisocial behaviour and crime. During the 2022/23 academic year, 1.6% more students who attended a Post 16 provider IN BOROUGH (5.3%) dropped out in Year 12 than those OUT OF BOROUGH (3.7%) Overall, 7% of our Year 13 students, whether they attended a Post 16 provider in or out of Borough were NEET by the end of November 2024. These numbers are much too high.

A minority of students choose to dropout within the first three months of starting a Post 16 qualification, therefore a core focus of the Post 16 enrichment strategy is to improve transitional support. Post 16 education involves an increase in independence, greater difficulty of work and a new structure to the day. These factors are often responsible for dropouts, but it is also important to consider other external factors such as health and wellbeing, financial situation, and access to transport. Transition from secondary school to Post 16 education need to be as seamless as possible, helping Young People to overcome some of these factors and avoid becoming NEET.

Therefore, areas that would benefit from development include:

- Attraction & Retention rates
- Current NEET statistics
- Internal awareness of strategic funding opportunities
- Communication & Marketing of our offer

The review aims to consider the current position, challenges, and proposed solutions in the Stockton-on-Tees post 16 provision. This will inform the Post 16 enrichment strategy currently in development.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

- How well are stakeholders collaborating to minimise any challenges?
- What careers advice do school leavers receive prior to applying for courses/apprenticeships?
- How do school leavers find out about post-16 providers and courses available?
- What extra-curriculum activities do post-16 providers provide and how are these marketed?
- Are there any extra benefits that can be offered to school leavers by post-16 providers?
- What pastoral arrangements are in place at post-16 provisions?
- What financial support is available for school leavers to apply for?
- Which courses/providers are young people dropping out from?

Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?

Cabinet, Council, local schools, colleges and training providers, and young people of the borough

Expected duration of review and key milestones:

Eight months (reporting to Cabinet in September 2026)

Approve scope and project plan – January 2026

Receive evidence – February 2026 – May 2026

Draft recommendations – June 2026

Final report – July 2026

Report to Cabinet – September 2026

What information do we need?

Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):

Partnership Strategic Aims (Word and PowerPoint documents)

Current strategy/draft strategy

Current Post 16 brochure

List of courses available

[Children and Young People Scrutiny Review of Careers Provision 2020](#)

New information:

Views of Partnership members

Views of school leavers / findings from consultations carried out by careers service and Partnership

Comparisons with the offer of providers from other Local Authority areas

Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)	What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?
Council Officers	Introductory presentation
Post 16 Strategic Board Working Strand Lead – Excellence for All	Collaboration to drive further improvement in outcomes Engagement with local businesses Pastoral arrangements within providers Extra-curricular activities and opportunities provided Funding/benefit advice available from providers
Post 16 Strategic Board Working Strand Lead – Communications and Marketing	Joint messaging to strengthen communication of Stockton's collective Post 16 offer When and how providers market their courses to school leavers The relationships between Bede, Stockton Riverside and Stockton Sixth Form colleges and local schools

Post 16 Strategic Board Working Strand Lead – Careers	Collaboration with Stockton's Careers Leaders Early intervention with students at risk of disengaging – Skills for Success Careers advice available both within schools and within post-16 provision Relationship with local businesses
Post 16 Strategic Board Working Strand Lead – Transitions	Measures in place to prepare for transition to post 16 education for all students Reasons why young people may become NEET
School leavers/students and their parents/carers	Their main priorities when choosing post 16 education The support they need to attend post 16 education Reasons why they may not continue with a course
How will this information be gathered? (e.g. financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey) Committee meetings, attendance at partnership meeting, reports, desk-based research, focus group	
How will key partners and the public be involved in the review? Committee meetings, information submissions, focus group of service users	
How will the review help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duty? The Equality Act 2010 protects everyone from discrimination on grounds of nine Protected Characteristics (including – but not limited to – age, gender, disability, ethnicity), and advance equality of opportunity for those with Protected Characteristics. Public bodies must have due regard for advancing equality which includes: • removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics • taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people The review will contribute towards meeting the Council's requirements under this Duty by reviewing the provision, and barriers to education, for all.	
How will the review contribute towards the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, or the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy? The review will contribute to Focus Area 1 of the JSNA: All children and families have the best start in life as it will Post-16 Education will affect the Commitment of Transition: ensure there is a joined-up pathway that fully supports young people in their transition to adulthood. Ensuring that young people have access to good quality education and training after leaving school will give them the qualifications and skills that they need in the future to gain employment and begin their careers.	

Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:

In considering the challenges and proposed solution to the current Post 16 offer the review will aim to assist in increasing attraction and retention of post-16 education, reduce the number of young people becoming NEET, and lead to better outcomes for the young people of the Borough.

Project Plan

Key Task	Details/Activities	Date	Responsibility
Scoping of Review	Information gathering	November/December	Scrutiny Officer Link Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss aims and objectives of review	02.12.25	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Agree Project Plan	Scope and Project Plan agreed by Committee	05.01.26	Select Committee
Publicity of Review	Determine whether Communications Plan needed		Link Officer, Scrutiny Officer
Obtaining Evidence	Working Group Lead for: Excellence for all Communication and marketing Careers Transition Focus groups: students; parent/carers; stakeholders Attendance at Partnership meeting	02.02.26 02.03.26 13.04.26 11.05.26 TBC TBC	Select Committee
Members decide recommendations and findings	Review summary of findings and formulate draft recommendations	8.06.26	Select Committee
Circulate Draft Report to Stakeholders	Circulation of Report	June 26	Scrutiny Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss findings of review and draft recommendations	TBC	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Final Agreement of Report	Approval of final report by Committee	06.07.26	Select Committee, Cabinet Member, Director
Consideration of Report by Executive Scrutiny Committee	Consideration of report	21.07.26 or 22.09.26	Executive Scrutiny Committee
Report to Cabinet/Approving Body	Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet	17.09.26	Cabinet / Approving Body