

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

12th JANUARY 2024

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDRENS SERVICES

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING (EET) POST 16

SUMMARY

The purpose of the report is to make CMT aware of the NEET and Not Known performance for Stockton. This is influenced by a range of factors, one of which is the varied impact of Careers Guidance in schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Corporate Management Team:

1. Note the rising numbers of young people experiencing NEET and are aware of the needs and profile of young people who have become NEET.
2. Consider the Education, Employment and Training (EET) of young people to be a key part of Powering Our Future.

INTRODUCTION

Preparation for leaving school

1. Following the demise of Connexions services across England and Wales by 2012, central government created the Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) to support schools and colleges in implementing the recommendations of the Gatsby Report. This set out eight key functions of an effective careers programme, called the Gatsby Benchmarks. Briefly, the benchmarks are as follows:
 - GB1 A stable careers programme
 - GB2 Learning from career and labour market information
 - GB3 Addressing the needs of each pupil (this includes Destination data)
 - GB4 Linking curriculum to careers
 - GB5 Encounters with employers and employees
 - GB6 Experience of workplaces
 - GB7 Encounters with FE and HE
 - GB8 Personal guidance
2. CEC collect self-assessment data from schools and colleges using their Compass tool and results for the last academic year are shown here and there is a clear disparity between this information and the information and intelligence collected by SBC. See Appendix 1

3. Schools are struggling to ensure all their pupils go on some form of work experience (GB6) and visit colleges and universities (GB7) post-covid. This would question if young people are given the advice and support that would meet local labour market needs.
4. Careers Guidance: 18 of 19 schools and colleges self-assessed as providing this to 100% of their pupils; only 84.9% of students told us they had received any (the lowest performance of any school was where only 42.9% of Y11s had 1:1 Guidance).

Regional and National Picture:

5. The table below highlights the Stockton on Tees performance in comparison to its regional neighbours.
6. Other than Redcar, all Tees Valley and most of the North East have seen rises in NEET. We expected to see this, but are surprised at some of the increases – Middlesbrough (much higher than Stockton on Tees when numbers were the same last year), Hartlepool (we traditionally have higher numbers and % than Hartlepool) and specifically Darlington, who have gone from best in NE to worst in NE in a year.
7. The NEET figures are often masked by high not knowns, the only way to accurately compare is to combine the 2 totals

NEET & NK Combined	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Nov-22	Difference
ENGLAND	34.6%	16.0%	8.5%	9.5%	1.0%
NORTH EAST	20.9%	10.5%	6.8%	6.1%	0.7%
County Durham	12.0%	7.7%	6.8%	6.5%	0.3%
Darlington	30.7%	16.2%	9.7%	4.0%	5.7%
Gateshead	21.1%	16.9%	6.3%	7.1%	1.2%
Hartlepool	11.3%	7.2%	7.3%	4.8%	2.5%
Middlesbrough	79.0%	35.8%	8.2%	5.9%	2.3%
Newcastle upon Tyne	20.5%	11.3%	7.6%	6.7%	0.9%
North Tyneside	15.5%	6.7%	5.9%	5.2%	0.7%
Northumberland	13.4%	8.5%	6.7%	6.1%	0.6%
Redcar and Cleveland	7.3%	5.5%	5.4%	7.1%	1.7%
South Tyneside	6.9%	5.9%	5.6%	6.2%	0.6%
Stockton-on-Tees	33.0%	7.1%	7.2%	5.9%	1.3%
Sunderland	21.8%	8.8%	6.2%	6.1%	0.1%

Risk Of NEET Indicator (RONI):

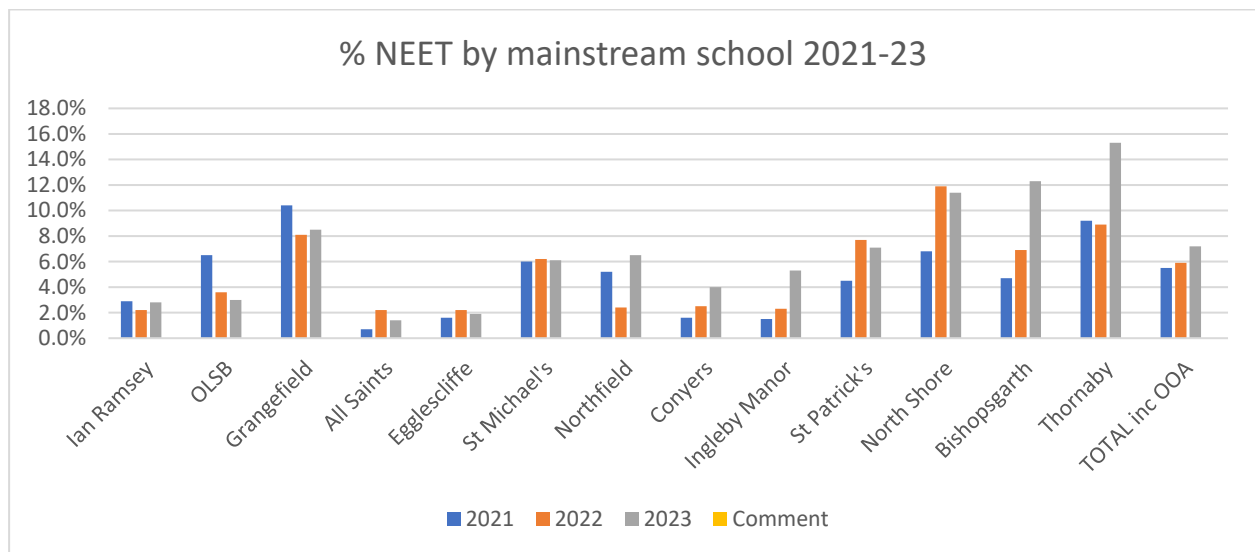
8. Since 2013 we have RAG rated the Y11 cohort by their statistical likelihood of becoming NEET, through our RONI. We provide 1:1 bespoke support to all Amber (medium risk of NEET) and Red (high risk of NEET) pupils across every type of provision including

specialist, EHE, out of area and Alternate Provision, this now amounts to over 20% of Y11 – over 500 young people.

9. Proportions of each group who are now NEET: Green = 2.0%; Amber = 11.0%; Red = 18.8%. These strongly suggest that the targeting system is accurate.
10. However, numbers from each group illustrate our NEET cohort in a different way: in Y12 there are 37 NEET who were Green on RONI; 29 NEET who were Amber on RONI; 30 NEET who were Red on RONI.

NEET Performance by School

11. From a record low of 3.9% in 2019, Stockton's NEET cohort has risen each year – as expected through Covid, when employment opportunities for young people reduced dramatically, but even more so in the last year where NEET has risen from 5.2% in 2022 to 7.1% in December 2023.
12. This increase is seen across the whole of Stockton but is not distributed evenly. We consider schools to play the most vital role in preventing NEET and so often measure performance for Y12 and Y13 by school, as below:

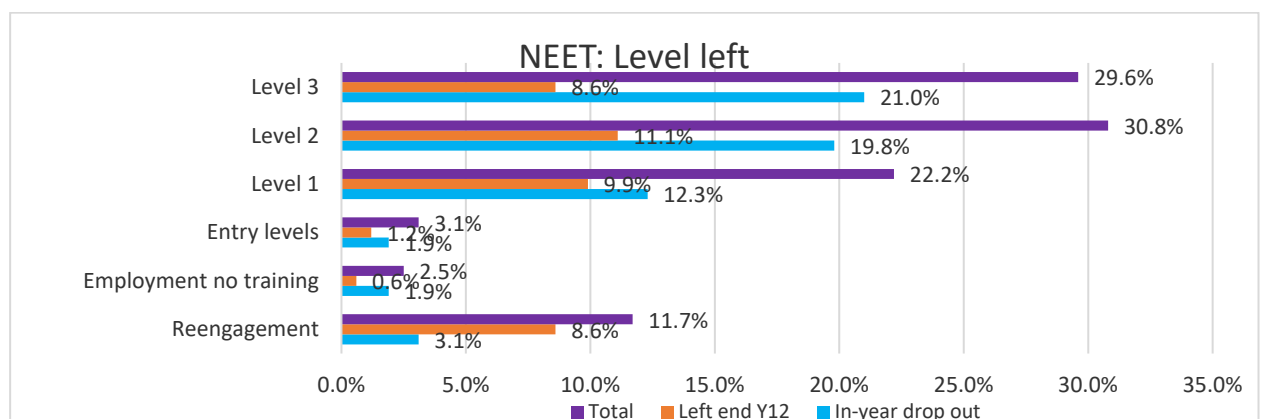


13. As we can see, three schools show NEET % decrease over the last three years – Ian Ramsey, Grangefield and OLSB (though Grangefield's NEET was worryingly high in 2021). SBC Careers supported RONI-Green in two of those schools. Four schools have seen a slight increase: All Saints, Egglecliffe, Northfield and St Michael's, and SBC Careers supported RONI-Green in three of those. The remainder have seen very significant increases: Conyers, Ingleby Manor, St Patrick's, North Shore, Bishopsgarth and Thornaby. SBC Careers provided some RONI-Green support to Conyers alone out of these schools. The last three in particular are producing high proportions of young people who become NEET.
14. Recruitment by colleges has become less robust, especially due to Covid:
 - i) Fewer visits take place / more virtual visits are offered
 - ii) Colleges do not ask for references from schools
 - iii) Interviews are not always required: application = place offered

- iv) Alternatives are not explored, e.g., if the applicant may not get the grades needed, or the applicant has not fully understood the course content or means of assessment
- v) Applicants are not having to explain their choices so the risk of making the wrong choice is increased
- vi) Enrolment has become depersonalized and often takes place en masse (hundreds of students all enrolling on the same morning), increasing the risk of students who are anxious not wanting to enroll.

Profile of NEET

15. The table below shows where our NEET cohort come from: over 60% have left level 2 or level 3 provision. The majority of our NEET population are not low-level learners; when young people tell us at Easter of Y11 that they are worried about getting the grades needed we can see below why we have to take this concern very seriously, as this is likely to have one of two results:
- a) The young person does get the grades needed, but only just, and struggles academically and ends up leaving the course early in the Autumn term or makes it to the end of the academic year but has low grades and leaves at the end of the year – to NEET, not another opportunity.
 - b) The young person misses the grades needed, is offered a lower-level course which they have not prepared for, and they decline this and become NEET, or they start Y12 but leave soon after, as the course isn't what they wanted. Really good Careers Guidance addresses this, as do more robust college visits and recruitment programmes.
16. We can also see in the below table two very different types of becoming NEET: leaving early due to in-year drop-out and leaving at the end of the academic year (usually having completed successfully a L1 or L2 course or passed the first year of a two-year L3). Drop-out mainly happens between September and November, with an additional spike in March each year.



17. The single biggest reason for becoming NEET is completing an academic year – over a third of our NEET cohort became NEET for this reason. Year to year progression is as big a priority as any other measure.
18. The concept of low-level (academically and aspirationally), long-term unemployed young person from a third-generation unemployed household does not exist in any meaningful way – fewer than 10 young people leave school each year and never do anything. Young people have aspirations and plans but the availability and type of provision can swiftly exclude many from purposeful engagement in EET.

19. To impact on the number of young people leaving learning, we have developed a RONI for post-16 which we have called the Risk Of Leaving Early Indicator (ROLEI). We have piloted this year and 92% of those who have become NEET in Y12 we identified as at risk of leaving early through this tool. The pilot is therefore considered successful, and we will launch ROLEI with providers, especially FE colleges, and use the intelligence gained to focus our staff on offering proactive support to the young people most at risk.
20. Another very significant factor in rising NEET is the lower levels of attendance and therefore achievement while in post-16 provision.
21. Young people who become NEET are very rarely job-ready: we deliver a proactive and highly supportive service aimed at taking a series of small steps toward full time engagement in learning or work. We cannot wait for them to come to us. The continued absence of a suitable drop-in setting places a further barrier to engaging NEET, as does the reduction then ending of funding for bespoke programmes which we could develop to re-engage those who needed help before they were ready to apply for opportunities.
22. Young people are leaving Level 2 and Level 3 provision having qualified, yet become NEET: we need to see better employability skills development, greater vocational awareness and focus; better networking with local employers to give these young people a smooth transition into traineeships, internships, apprenticeships and paid work, rather than have them becoming NEET then joining the workforce at a lower level after a period of time unemployed.

Conclusions

23. Our young people are the future of our borough, with lower school attendance, increased numbers experiencing social, emotional and mental health issues and the higher risk of exploitation. Education, Employment and Training of young people should be a high priority.
24. Young people have a key role in the economic prosperity and regeneration of our towns, if we want to meet local labour market needs, our young people need to be prepared and ready for the world of work.
25. The market for universal Careers Guidance is not working sufficiently well across Stockton, resulting in preventable NEET.
26. Student recruitment, particularly to vocational college programmes which produce half of all NEET, needs to be made more robust in order to recruit the right young people onto the right programmes.
27. Local provision reflects what has been offered in recent years, rather than what is needed in the local and regional economy.
28. Attendance in schools must be increased in order to facilitate higher attendance in post-16.
29. Schools and colleges need greater challenge in their Careers Education programmes, ensuring that higher numbers of students are experiencing full achievement of all the Gatsby Benchmarks. CEC / TVCA are happy to report on high achievement but rising

NEET and pupil feedback explicitly show disparities in what is self-assessed and what is experienced by the recipients of Careers Education.

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Appendix 1

School Reported Careers Data Compared with SBC Intelligence and Information

Fig 1

School Reported Data:

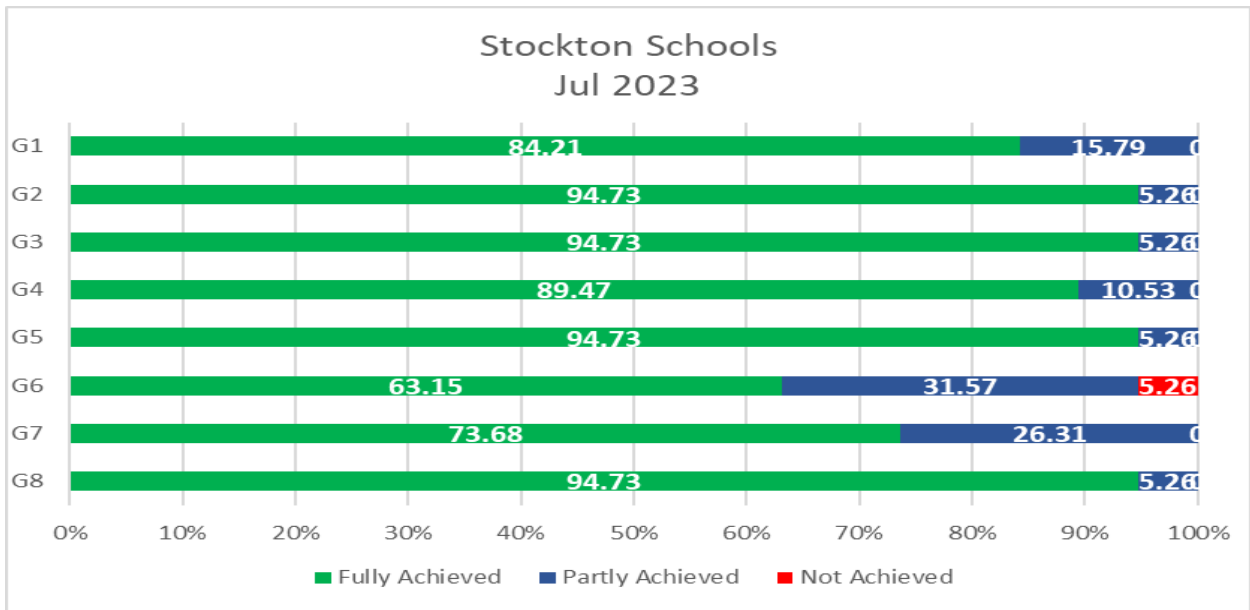


Fig 2

SBC Careers surveyed Y11s across all mainstream schools at Easter 2023 and some of the findings contrast significantly with the above school self-assessments:

