

Report to PVFM

Participation of Young People aged 16-18 in Education, Employment or Training (EET)

Portfolio Holder:

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Purpose of the Report

This report will update the Committee on current Participation and NEET rates together with a summary on activity during Covid and that planned in the future to ensure that we are shaping and influencing opportunities where possible for our 16-18 year olds.

Recommendations

Committee to note the current landscape and experiences of 16-18 year olds which is impacting on their Participation in education, employment or training.

Participation of Young People aged 16-18 in Education, Employment or Training (EET)

1 Background

The LA continues to fulfil its duties around encouraging, enabling and assisting young people (yp) to participate in education or training and tracking those aged 16 and 17 through the commission of the targeted support offer delivered by Positive Steps, this includes some dedicated resource for our SEND and Children Looked After (CLA) cohort.

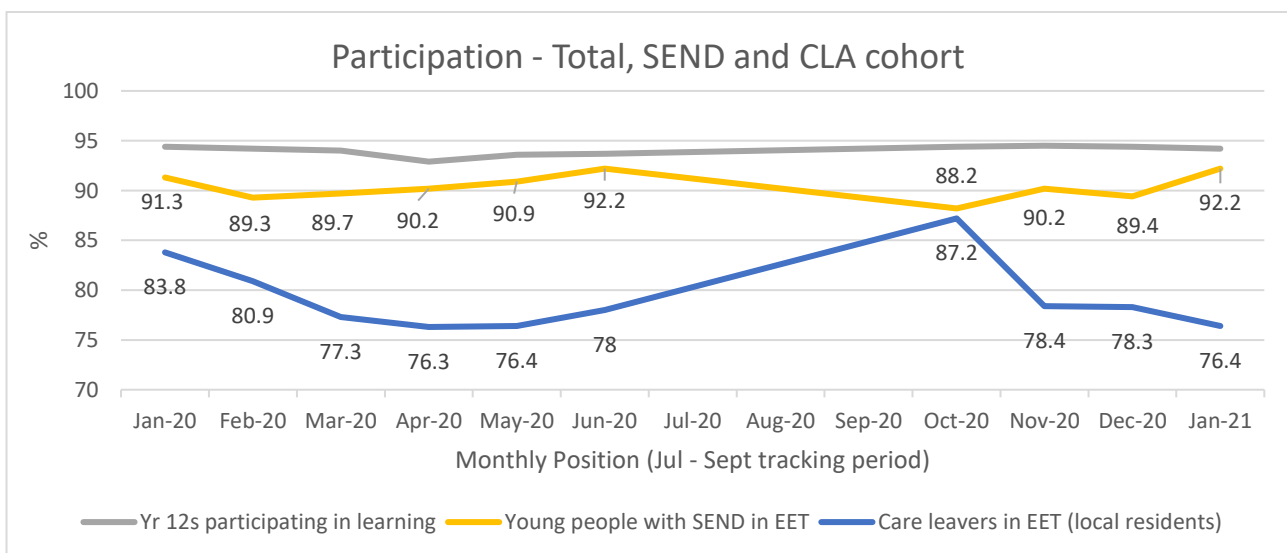
The effects of Covid on our yp are well reported with concerns about the effects on their education including uncertainty about exams and qualifications, the quality of education and a move to home-schooling. In addition, concerns about wellbeing, in particular loneliness, dissatisfaction with life, stress, anxiety, boredom and concerns about the future are all affecting their levels of engagement and motivation¹.

Our approach across partners in Oldham is to ensure that yp can access the advice and support they require; that we have opportunities available, albeit in a restricted format in some cases and to engage with our yp to hear their voices and respond as best we can.

This report will update the Committee on current Participation and NEET rates together with a summary on activity during Covid and planned in the future to ensure that we are shaping and influencing where possible for our 16-18 year olds.

2 Current Position

Currently 94.2% year 12s are participating in some form of EET, this rate has been consistently steady in the past 12 months, despite the additional challenges brought by Covid-19. The graph below shows the variations for the SEND and CLA cohort who ordinarily have dedicated careers advisor resource available to them. During Covid, this has been re-purposed to provide a greater focus on wellbeing and engagement through regular check-in contact – supporting where necessary to ensure that Participation can continue.

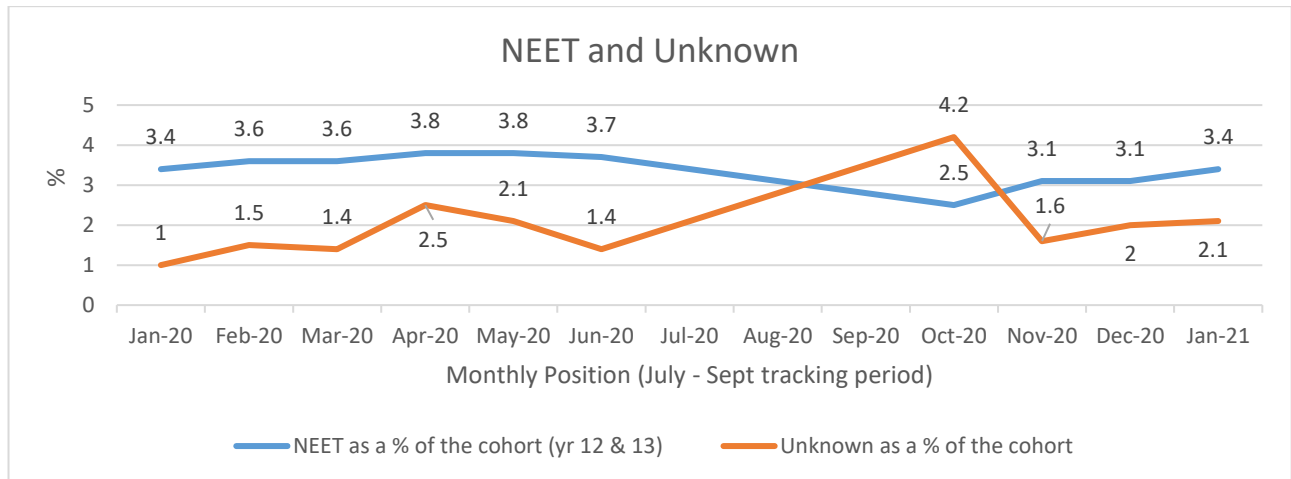


¹

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/ageing/articles/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsonyoungpeopleingreatbritain/3aprilto10may2020#impacts-on-well-being>

It is not unusual for us to see Participation drop following the autumn term and this appears to be as a result of our local CLA cohort who have left local colleges during this period (please note that numbers are small for this group). The advisor working specifically with this NEET cohort is working closely with individuals to re-engage them in EET or local engagement programmes and we expect some positive engagements during January will be reflected in the Feb data.

The NEET rate currently sits at 3.4% and has been steady over the past 12 months, with January 2021 position in line with Jan 2020. We receive monthly starter leaver information from providers to ensure that an advisor can contact yp and re-engage, ultimately reducing the amount of time potentially spent NEET. There are currently 209 yp recorded as NEET with 157 actively seeking EET opportunities – some wish to wait until lockdown is over before they consider moving on. There are also some who are now helping out with the childcare/home education of younger siblings, and therefore cannot put themselves first.



The offer available from post 16 settings is generally a blended learning model, a different way of working which is positive for some but not for others. Positive Steps careers advisors are continuing to engage with young people and report a number of reasons for withdrawal, including:

- Course doesn't suit, plans to return to a different course in September
- Not enjoying the online learning and college life not being as expected due to Covid
- Preference to try and get an apprenticeship as an alternative
- Physical and mental health issues (see appendices for examples/case studies)

The unknown figure has also risen slightly, again, on account of leaver lists where we have tried several and varied attempts at contact but have had to make the young person unknown as we cannot ascertain a certain destination. Follow up of these young people continues, although they are categorised as unknown.

3. Activity to Support Participation – Covid and Beyond

During first lockdown, a number of workstrands were put in place by the Education Directorate to support children and young people across 0-25 yrs; one of these focused on Transition and set out a number of goals, which, together with our partners we responded to:

Goal 1: Young people arrive at their expected setting in September (Reported lack of engagement, motivation, anxiety and nervousness of yr 11s).

- Response: Yr 11 survey capturing their views/concerns about moving into post 16 This led to the development of a good practice guide developed with providers setting out expectations and offer to alleviate yp concerns (see annex A).

Goal 2: Young people ready to engage in learning on arrival at their setting (Potential increase in behavioural episodes as a result of the circumstances).

- Response: Free Trauma training was rolled out across Oldham across 0-25 years to ensure that providers were aware and equipped to understand and respond to behaviours which may present.

Goal 3: Young people are able to study at the expected level/course due to a period of non-traditional learning. (Impact of lost learning on confidence / unhappy with calculated grades and subsequent proposed course offer).

- Response: Discussions with local providers to ensure that yp were not unfairly disadvantaged due to grade scenario, potential lack of enthusiasm or commitment as a result of being disengaged. Our year 12 Moving On data showed that 95.6% of year 11s moved on to EET, a small reduction of 0.5% from 2019s rate (96.1%).

Goal 4: Young people are in a good place with their mental health, are able to settle and socially engage with other students. (Deterioration of mental health, social isolation)

- Response: A programme of emotional health wellbeing support was put in place and widely promoted to ensure that yp and parents had access to resources to support.

Engagement programmes are essential for yp, never more so than now. We do have some available in Oldham however content is restricted at present due to Covid with most only delivering online, which is becoming less appealing to some yp. We currently have 7 organisations offering provision in Oldham that will support young people to engage and obtain skills for education, employment or training:

- The Growth Company - ESF Skills Support for Growth ongoing
- Groundwork – Re-connect programme ongoing
- Princes Trust – variety of online courses, updated monthly
- Mahdlo – Get a Job programme 6 week rolling programme
- Keyring – AdVenture programme (LD & Autism) 11 week programme, started in late January.
- Pescar – Digital Artwork Course (14+) 15 – 20 February only
- Rio Ferdinand Foundation (RFF) – focus on sport, photography, art as an engagement tool
- Potential Barclays 100 programme to be delivered by Positive Steps (subject to approved funding).

During lockdown we brought together potential providers of engagement type activity to ensure they were aware of the needs of Oldham yp and adults, ahead of a funding opportunity with Princes Trust. This included officers from Aftercare, Virtual School and Get Oldham Working together with Positive Steps so was relevant for those up to age 30 also. The RFF were successful in this round and those who had applied but not successful were signposted to Action Together who support the VC sector around bid writing – we hope in the longer term that this will encourage more local organisations to apply where funding is available.

In July 2020, we successfully secured some funding from GMCA to deliver a project which is focused on removing barriers to apprenticeships for those who are under-represented (BAME, SEND, CLA). This project is delivered in partnership with Positive Steps and Northern Care Alliance (NCA) and will provide 10 yp with an apprenticeship with NCA, together with 30 other yp having access to the employability opportunities and support, increasing their experience. Despite Covid challenges, this project is going brilliantly with 3 yp accessing work placements at Royal Oldham Hospital and an apprenticeship vacancy imminent.

During Apprenticeship Week 2021, Positive Steps hosted ten Microsoft Teams workshops with training providers across Greater Manchester, to directly introduce NEET young people, college students and Year 11 pupils to apprenticeship offers across various sectors. A monthly bulletin for NEET young people outlining the range of current opportunities open to them is available and they

intend to build on their growing digital offer through the Barclays 100 bid which allows us to distribute tablets to NEET young people in need of them, and offer a menu of ongoing Teams workshops to develop their careers skills and improve wellbeing.

We will continue to build on our activity to support Participation, in particular for our yr 11s who face uncertainty over the coming months. A few key areas include:

- Revised year 11 survey – with a greater focus on social and wellbeing needs.
- NEET survey – exploring aspirations and barriers to engagement.
- Post 16 Pledge – ensuring yp know that providers have a place for them in Sept regardless of the uncertainty around exams, attendance etc.
- Mapping of local provision to identify any gaps.
- Continue to explore how we can grow engagement provision locally and also influence existing providers to flex in order to meet the needs of our yp.

4. Key Issues for PVFM to Discuss

Increasing youth unemployment is an area of concern nationally which has been exacerbated by the Covid pandemic. The societal impact of unemployment is well-documented, as is the negative impact on life chances for the long-term unemployed. Supporting young people to encourage participation in EET and to prevent an increase in 16 to 18 year olds becoming NEET, is therefore central to our strategies for addressing disadvantage in Oldham and to prevent longer term disengagement. This will continue to be an area of significant focus in our plans to shape recovery from the pandemic.

5. Key Questions for PVFM to Consider

The Committee is asked to note the range of interventions currently in place to support young people into EET and prevent the incidence of NEET increasing, and to comment and discuss accordingly.

6. Links to Corporate Outcomes – An Inclusive Economy

#ourbit: Working with partners to create quality work prospects - and ensuring all residents can access new skills and opportunities and be work-ready

#yourbit: Making the most of the education and skills offer and aiming to better yourself

#result: An ambitious and socially mobile borough

7. Additional Supporting Information – see 9

8. Consultation – n/a

The voice of young people and engagement of a wide range of providers / stakeholders has been and will continue to be central to this agenda.

9. Appendices

- Supporting Participation of young people aged 16+ - good practice guide (developed with partners in response to young people feedback).
- Examples / case studies of engagement experience with yp.



POSITIVE STEPS
SUPPORT | CHALLENGE | CHANGE



Oldham
Council

Supporting Participation of young people aged 16+ - good practice examples

Created by Oldham Council, Positive Steps and Oldham Training and Personal Development Network

Continued engagement activity with prospective / returning students

Maintaining regular contact with prospective students before they officially enrol is supportive and makes it more likely that they will join/return in August / September. This helps young people feel welcomed and connected and is particularly important during this period of sustained inactivity.

Virtual Tours of Buildings

Entering an unfamiliar building can be daunting, and in the absence of a physical tour, this is the next best thing. Don't forget to include toilets, eating areas (how to queue and buy), how to access the building (swipe cards, etc.), where to go and what to do during free periods, library and mentor support offices in your tour.

33% of Year 11's who responded to the survey highlighted that getting around the building is a worry for them.

Buddy systems

Existing students supporting new students to settle into the virtual environment and be available for questions when required.

Furthermore, is there scope to introduce new students to each other over the summer, virtually, so they can build friendships before starting college/training? Over 51% of respondents to the Year 11 survey expressed worries over meeting new people and making friends.

Young Person Quote

"I'm worried that due to Covid 19 my learning will be affected and with the social distancing rules I am worried that I won't be able to make any new friends. I'm also worried about things going back to normal".

Key workers	<p>Identify a staff member as a virtual contact so the new young person has a member of staff they are familiar with before they begin the course.</p>
Pre-programme activities	<p>Offer prospective students' activities relevant to their course, to engage them and create a sense of belonging. The activities will reduce the natural regression we see during the summer period and reduce further regression during the extended period of non-activity.</p>
Virtual Chat	<p>Create a virtual chat facility on provider websites with a member of staff so young people can ask questions, privately, remotely and when they want to.</p>
Social Stories	<p>The use of social stories may be particularly helpful to the SEND cohort to support them with the transition to College, either virtual or the introduction of safe physical access.</p>
Increased summer transition activity	<p>To make young people feel a part of the provider community and feel welcomed, the provision of transition activities, both online and face to face where available can reduce transition anxieties for both young people and families.</p>
Young Person Quote	<p><i>"looking forward to going to college but a little worried about meeting new people and making friends my place is now guaranteed and even though I met teachers on [open] day would be good to get to know them more before starting course"</i></p>
Links with Careers Advisers	<p>Careers Advisers linked to the young person's previous school can support providers to engage harder to reach young people.</p>
Online Induction Activity	<p>To ensure anxiety is reduced regarding placements, online inductions can provide reassurance to young people and families that destinations are secure.</p>
FAQs	<p>Providing a frequently asked questions page on your website can ensure families and young people have easy access to common queries. You may also want to consider how easy it is for people to</p>

	ask questions: Is there a helpline? Is live chat an option?
“How to” links	As this year will be different to all other years, a section on your website dedicated to providing videos and instructions on how your learning site will operate at the start of the academic year will support learners to understand and feel more confident to “arrive” in August/September.
Young Person Quote	<i>“I’m confused about starting at college”</i>
Enhanced Enrolment	Consider what this might look and feel like for young people. Is there anything you can do to offer additional support to a cohort of young people who have not been in education since March? Do they need a tour of the building? Perhaps they would benefit from a chance to see their classrooms, speak to staff and look at the college facilities? 38% of respondents to the Year 11 survey expressed concerns over the enrolment process.
A day in the life	<p>Create a video showing “a day in the life of a student/apprentice” would help young people to understand what to expect and what is expected when arriving at your setting.</p> <p>47% of Year 11’s who responded to the survey have concerns about getting back into a routine, videos showing what to expect will help them to understand what is expected of them.</p>
Class mixer’s	Whether it’s a virtual get together or you can facilitate physical meet ups, opportunities for the class to “get together” before the start of term is a great way to introduce students to each other and enable them to begin to form friendships before the work starts.
Young Person Quote	<i>“Chance to talk to new classmates?”</i>

Client 1 - M

I picked up this Year 13 NEET young person, at the request of a Case Manager with Youth Justice. At time of referral he was about to leave/be asked to leave his college. A lot going on in his life- things not identified in school, police caution, unhappy at college and Mum thinks he needs EHCP

Initially thought we might look at purely support via ESF NEET/Growth Company but family wanted to aim at work. They wanted to get CSCS and family arranged a course themselves; we provided the links for support with CSCS test practice.

I felt the usual concern that CSCS on its own isn't the magic bullet to get work on building sites and M's mum also felt he needed experience. Contacted Tameside Skills Centre and asked them to ring Mum for an informal chat which has led onto a meeting. M says he will join their Level 1 multi-skills construction course 'as long as it's not like college'

Update- since then, M has struggled with his mental health and decided that he can't start at Ashton Skills Centre. We will continue to support when M is ready.

Client 2 - S

Referred by Positive Steps Oasis Integrated health worker, S is 17 and didn't go on to anything after school. Also has some turbulence at home - was living with Uncle but that fell through and back with Mum.

S doesn't have his own phone or email, so contact has to be via Mum's phone. Mum says he always loses every phone he has-which may be a way to avoid joining anything. Made some progress by phone but asked S if he would come to Medtia - appt arranged but S has anxiety issues and Mum rang to say he just couldn't come through the door, even with her there.

CI created bespoke information sheets for S and Mum to look at options. Followed up by phone and S had altered his view on college. Worked closely with social worker and member of staff at college to arrange a visit to college, which I attended. S seemed enthused about a course with the Skills and Employability department at Oldham College.

Update: S has failed to go in for his start date at Oldham College, Mum feels he won't go without somebody with him.