

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

Portfolio Holder:

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January 2023

Purpose of the Report

This report will update the Committee on current Participation and NEET rates together with a summary on activity during the past 12 months and 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

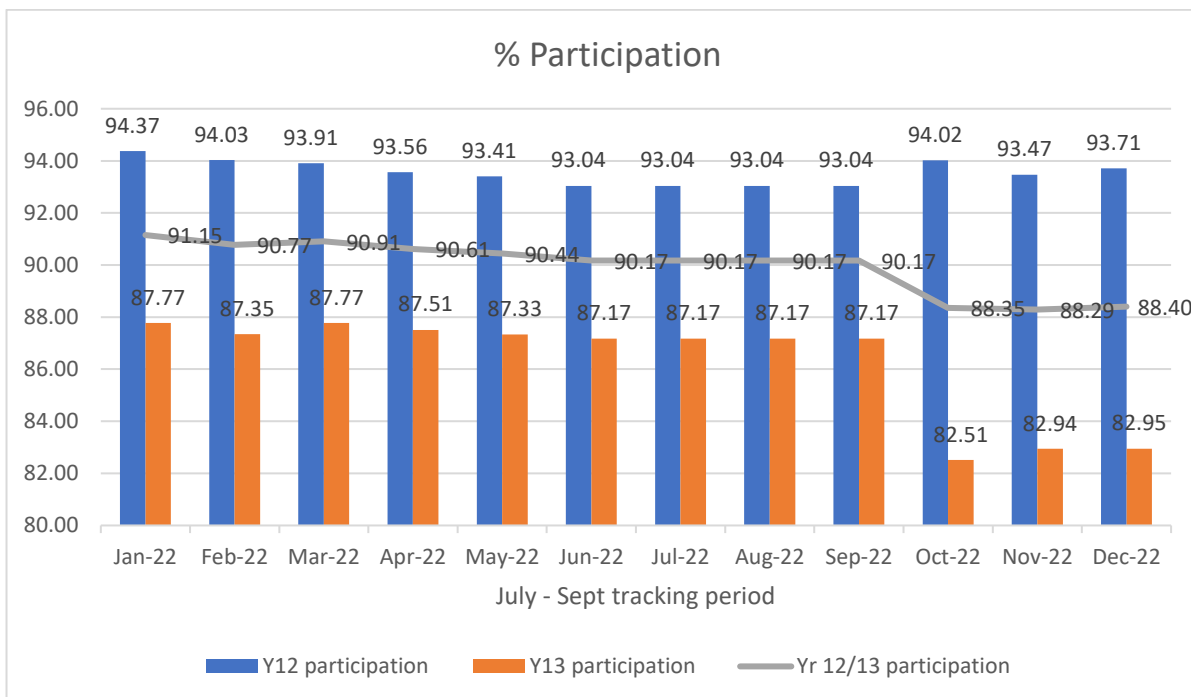
The LA continues to fulfil its duties around encouraging, enabling and assisting young people to participate in education or training and tracking those aged 16 and 17 through the commission of the targeted support offer delivered by Positive Steps, this includes some dedicated resource for our SEND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

Our approach across partners in Oldham is to ensure that young people can access the advice and support they require; that we have opportunities available and to engage with our young people 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 planned in the future to ensure that we are shaping and influencing where possible for our 16-18 year olds.

2 Current Position

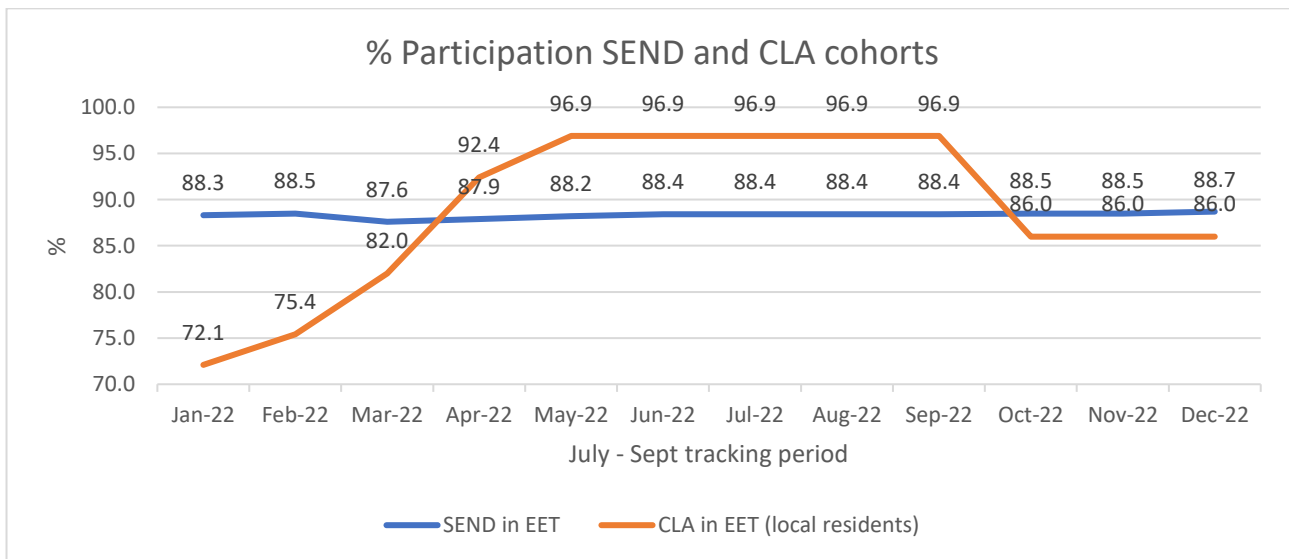
Latest reported data (December) reports that 93.71% year 12s are participating in some form of EET, this rate has seen a slight decrease over the past 12 months. However, our data highlights the significantly lower rate of participation for our Y13 cohort. It must be highlighted that the current Y13 cohort were the cohort most significantly affected by school closures during the pandemic, and it's continued effects on our young people is still being felt by these young people. Concerns about wellbeing, in particular loneliness, dissatisfaction with life, stress, anxiety, boredom and concerns about the future all continue to affect young people and their levels of engagement and motivation.



The actual cohort numbers fluctuate month by month across the year, but the average annual cohort number for Y12/13 combined is 6401. To provide context, if we take the % drop in participation for Y12/13 between September 22 (90.17%) and October 22 (88.35%), the numerical drop is 117 young people.

It is not unusual for us to see participation drop in the autumn term and this year is no different. The drop can be because of a new cohort of young people transitioning to a new environment, but the data shows a significant drop in participation for our Y13 cohort who continue to struggle to re-engage following the pandemic and re-adjust to a return to participation in person, some struggling with their mental health. We have noted a particular issue in the Autumn term where a significant number of Y13 students just did not return to the second year of their course. The careers advisors working with the NEET cohort work closely to re-engage them in EET or local engagement programmes and we expect some positive engagements during January which will be reflected in the February data.

The Connect to Your Future programme funded GMCA has provided an additional support offer for these young people. Teams are able to refer and sign up significant numbers to work with a careers coach or mentor with some excellent outcomes, providing us with evidence that if capacity is available to undertake the work and a young person is willing to engage and take on the practical and emotional support that a mentor can offer, they are able to re-engage in positive activity.



The actual cohort numbers fluctuate month by month across the year, but the average annual cohort number for Y12/13 SEND is 332, and the % participation has been steady all year.

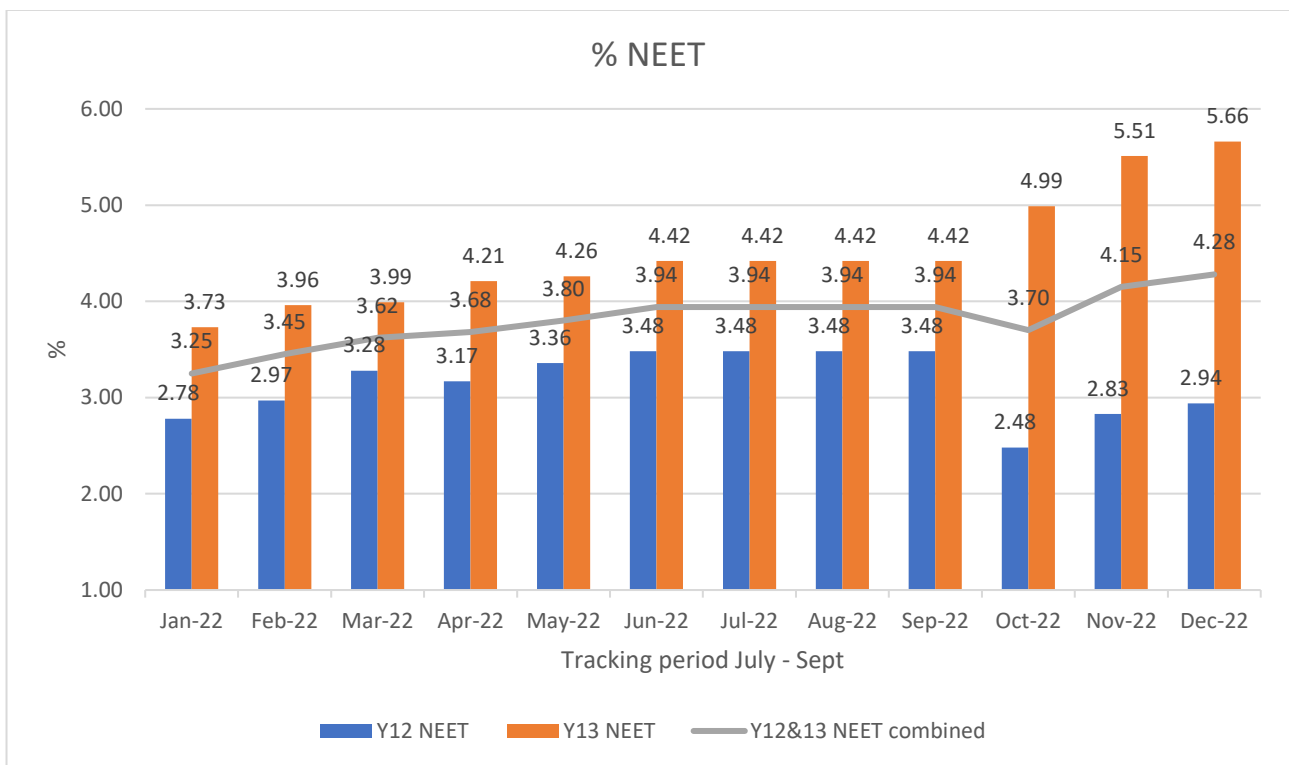
The average annual cohort number for CLA (16 – 18) is 57. To provide context, if we take the % drop in participation for this cohort between September 22 (96.9%) and October 22 (86%), the numerical drop is 6 young people.

The graph above shows the participation variations for the SEND and CLA cohort who have dedicated careers advisor resource available to them.

The smaller cohort impacts the data, therefore is not unusual to see a bigger drop in EET whilst our most vulnerable young people transition in the autumn term. The SEND data shows a consistent level of participation on 2021 data, but the CLA cohort has seen an increase in participation for 2022. Given the further barriers these young people face this requires a higher level of support and our dedicated Careers Advisor support working with PA's is essential to ensuring these young people are encouraged and supported to re-engage.

Our Virtual School (VS) coordinates extra support for the young people in our care to assist them to transition successfully into Post 16 provision. This is provided through a dedicated Post 16 Education Officer. The VS deliver a range of targeted activities and programmes to raise aspirations and participation, utilising information/data in Personal Education Plans (PEPs) on careers advice and guidance. Ongoing liaison with the VS and Positive Steps ensures that there is oversight of Oldham CLA and the careers advice and guidance they have received or require.

The SEND Team co-ordinates education provision for young people aged 16 – 25 with an EHC plan to ensure they are accessing an education provision that meets the outcomes in their EHC plan and supports them to achieve their aspirations.



The latest reported (December) combined NEET rate currently sits at 4.28% and has been increasing slightly month on month over the past year, with December 2022 position higher than January 2022. We receive monthly starter leaver information from providers to ensure that an advisor can contact young people early to re-engage, ultimately reducing the amount of time potentially spent NEET. There are currently 282 young people recorded as NEET with 240 actively seeking EET opportunities – some have been waiting for the opportunity they wish to pursue has become available (e.g. apprenticeships), some due to health and other reasons are a little further from EET. These young people are

offered engagement programmes such as Connect to Your Future or GMFRS TEAMS to support them to re-engage.

In line with the participation data, the NEET data highlights the difficulties our Y13 cohort is experiencing with successfully accessing EET, with Y13's levels 2.68% higher than our Y12 cohort.

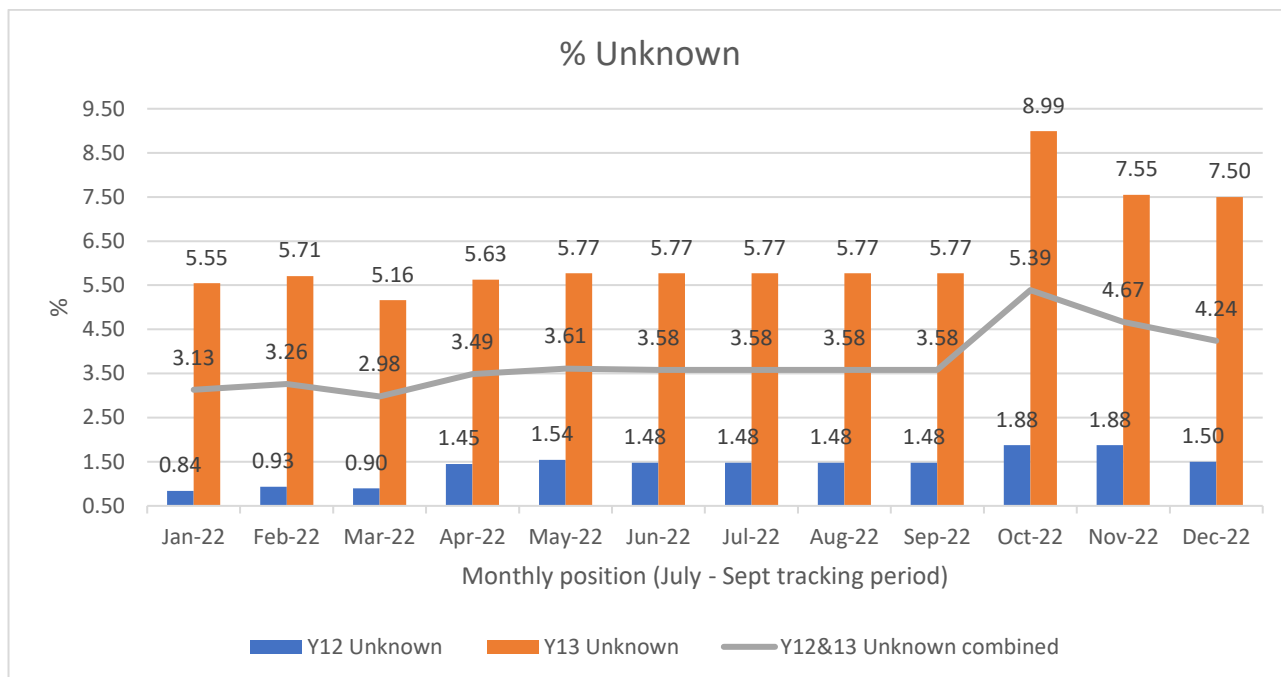
The offer available from post 16 settings is not dissimilar to last year, although the landscape is beginning to change to meet the requirements of the Skills and Post 16 Act. The continued roll out of T-Level courses is providing another option for young people to consider, but the offer is in its infancy and needs to embed. The recent announcement regarding the ceasing of traineeships will see providers being required to change their delivery models to adapt, which we hope will be a positive change for young people.

Positive Steps careers advisors and mentors are continuing to engage with young people and they report a number of reasons for withdrawal, including:

- Severe confidence and anxiety issues
- Illness
- Pregnancy (small numbers)
- New arrivals
- Refused college due to waiting to secure apprenticeship/employment

More detailed analysis of the withdrawal reasons has brought up some interesting trends for us to consider over the next twelve months.

- Securing a college place but just didn't feel ready when the time came
- Becoming NEET but were not identified as "at risk of" during Y11
- Not taking up a college place due to wanting an apprenticeship/job but are ineffective in their attempts to secure this, despite offers of support
- Disguised compliance
- Parents/carers complicit in the avoidance of participation



Again, to provide some context, taking the average annual cohort number for Y12/13 combined is 6401. The increase in % unknown in September (3.58%) and October (5.39%) equates to 116 young people.

The December unknown (combined) figure of 4.24% has also risen against January 2022 figures, and is significantly higher than the last year. Again, the graph demonstrates it is our Y13 cohort who are becoming unknown which is concerning as they are the furthest category away from EET. Positive Steps try 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. It is difficult to ascertain the reasons for young people becoming unknown, and we will continue to use lived experience, research, peer to peer shared good practice to explore the reasons for this and work with partners to ensure young people access the support they need to participate.

3. Activity to Support Participation

Engagement programmes are essential for young people, never more so than now. We currently have a number of organisation's offering provision in Oldham or GM that Oldham young people can access that will support young people to engage and obtain skills for education, employment or training:

- The Growth Company - ESF Skills Support for Growth
- Positive Steps – ESF NEET programme (Connect to Your Future)
- Upturn – various offers of support (16+)
- Ingeous – ESF NEET (18+)
- Groundwork – Re-connect programme
- Groundwork – Princes Trust TEAMS Programme (18+)
- GMFRS – Princes Trust TEAMS Programme (16+)
- Princes Trust – variety of online courses, updated monthly
- Reconnect at Mahdlo

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- Keyring – AdVenture programme (LD & Autism) 11 week programme
 - Step Into Care (GM Health and Social Care Careers Hub)
 - Roots to Opportunity (Green Steps and Skill Mill (YJ))
 - Oldham Youth Hub
 - Get Oldham Working

Due to the rise in the number of funded projects available for young people in Oldham, we felt it is becoming increasingly difficult to navigate what's available for young people. We have created a padlet [Opportunities for young people \(padlet.com\)](https://padlet.com) which provides a visual of what's currently available to young people to support them to become EET. The padlet is continually updated and is available for young people, parents and professionals to use.

Oldham's Post 16 Team, Get Oldham Working, Job Centre Plus and Positive Steps are working together to deliver a joint initiative known as Oldham Youth Hub. The initiative will be a collaboration of professionals who will pledge services and agree to work in a supportive, young person focused and positive outcome-based way that supports young people aged 16 – 25 years old to access the right support to enable them to participate in activity that will eventually lead to an employment opportunity. Oldham's Youth Hub will link closely with the GMCA Youth Hub working group to ensure our activity is best practice among our GM colleagues. The Youth Hub will officially launch in January with promotional activity encouraging other services to become part of the Youth Hub, making pledges of support to young people.

Activity with our Youth Council last year indicated that the careers education offer, or the communication of the careers education offer in Oldham schools and colleges could be improved. We are continuing to explore this with the Youth Council, Careers Enterprise Company and Positive Steps to establish how we can present the youth voice in the development of careers education curriculum's across our education providers.

Oldham Training Provider and Personal Development Network meet to discuss how we can support young people become EET in Oldham. Over the next 12 months, we plan to merge this group with the GOW Partnership meeting to support the transition from participation to employment, with a view to closing the gap between participation and youth unemployment.

We were experiencing a significant drop in young people accessing the physical spaces available to them to discuss re-engaging and returning to participation. Young people are returning to face to face, slowly, but we do need to create a better digital presence. Digital IAG is still a work in progress, but may be included within the specification as part of the future commission of the targeted independent advice and guidance contract which will be drafted over the next 12 months. As adults working with young people we acknowledge the need for us to adapt our communication channels so we are available to young people on the platforms they choose to engage with and allow us to be a part of. With this in mind, we are beginning scope out a potential digital IAG offer, and what this could look like in the future, to see if young people begin to engage with this as a first step to participation.

We will continue to build on our activity to support participation, in particular for our Y13's who are experiencing significant difficulties with their participation. A few key areas include:

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- Youth Hub development
 - Youth Voice work on Careers Education
 - Work and Skills Partnership – addressing the NEET rate vs. Youth Unemployment rate
 - Merge of OTPPDN & Local Leads to support transition from 16 – 19 into 19+ employment or skills development
 - Supported Internship project
 - Chair of the PfA group – wider benefits on EET
 - Tri-borough data comparisons
 - Participation in education, training and employment age 16 to 18, Calendar Year 2021 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk) – annual data is published in June, but here are the headlines from most recent national data
 - Mapping of local provision to identify any gaps.
 - Explore rise in unknowns, reasons for this and seek options to reduce barriers
 - Scoping of a potential digital IAG offer
 - 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 young people.
 - Careers Fair at Oldham QEH

4. Key Issues for PVFM to Discuss

Increasing youth unemployment is an area of concern nationally and locally. Oldham's youth unemployment rate is particularly unsatisfactory, and the gap between our NEET rate and youth unemployment requires some work to understand the disparity.

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 and unemployment. This will continue to be an area of significant focus in our plans and the emerging Work and Skills Partnership will strategically drive this work and Post 16 participation will be a key indicator and work stream

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 – n/a

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 – n/a