

People and Health Scrutiny Committee

8 April 2025

Children not in Education, Employment or Training

For Decision

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:

Cllr C Sutton, Children's Services, Education & Skills

Local Councillor(s):

All

Executive Director:

P Dempsey, Executive Director of People - Children

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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

This report summarises the position of participation in post-16 employment, education and training of young people aged 16-18 and how we are supporting those that are not in employment, education or training.

Recommendation:

Members are asked to support the approach of Children's Services in enabling young people to return to employment, education and training.

Reason for Recommendation:

We have a statutory duty to support young people to access employment, education or training and evidence shows this leads to better life outcomes as adults.

1. Context

- 1.1. The September Guarantee is a guarantee of an offer, made by the end of September, of an appropriate place in post-16 education or training for every young person completing compulsory education. This is to assist young people to make a seamless transition into post-16 learning or employment with training. Local authorities are responsible for leading the 'September Guarantee' process, working with schools and colleges across their area.
- 1.2. As part of this process Dorset Council is required to report to the Department for Education (DfE) on participation rates at the end of the autumn term. Participation in employment, education and training includes the following categories:
 - Full-time education
 - Apprenticeship
 - Work based learning
 - Part-time education
 - Other

We are also required to report on those that are not in employment, education or training, and those that are not known.

- 1.3. Since the Education, Employment and Training team transferred in-house in 2021, we have put considerable effort into knowing and understanding our post-16 participation situation, working closely with education and training providers, and investing in additional staff to reduce the number of young people whose status is not known.

2. Current situation

- 2.1. In December 2024 we reported to the DfE a Not in Employment, Education or Training rate of 4.0% [322 young people YP] and a Not Known rate of 0.4% [35 YP]. This is compared to 3.1% Not in Employment, Education or Training [229 YP] and 0.6% Not Known [49] in December 2023. The reduction of the percentage of young people in employment, education or training is not what we want but does reflect a national trend of an increased number of young people not in employment, education or training and is reflected in the figures of statistical neighbours

as well. (Statistical neighbours are local authority areas with similar characteristics to each other).

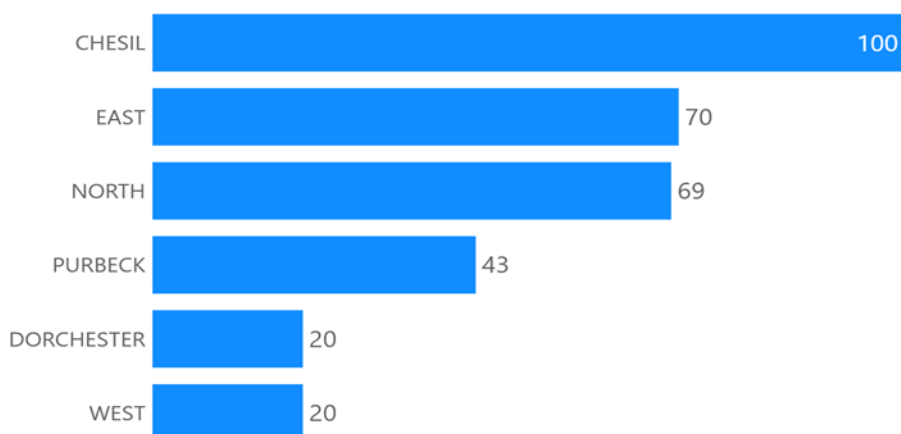
- 2.2. Although the rate of young people not in employment, education or training in Dorset is higher than national figures and those of our statistical neighbours, we have a very low 'Not Known' rate, which is better than all our statistical neighbours. In the work we have undertaken over the last few years to reduce our Not Known rate, we have found that most of these young people are Not in Employment, Education or Training. It is therefore important that the Not Known and Not in Employment, Education or Training rates are taken together, and when we do so, Dorset is ranked third out of ten with our statistical neighbours, behind Wiltshire and Shropshire. This is shown in the table below.

Select Local Authority	Academic Age 16-17 (Y12-Y13) NEET %	Academic Age 16 - 17 (Y12-Y13) NK %
Dorset	4.0%	0.4%
Indicator for statistical neighbours	3.6%	2.3%

Name	Academic Age 16-17 (Y12-Y13) NEET %	Academic Age 16 - 17 (Y12-Y13) NK %
Devon	4.2%	2.0%
Somerset	3.7%	4.3%
Shropshire	2.4%	0.7%
Gloucestershire	3.8%	0.9%
Worcestershire	3.4%	4.1%
East Sussex	4.7%	0.7%
Suffolk	4.5%	1.1%
Cornwall	4.5%	2.2%
Wiltshire	2.6%	0.9%
North Somerset	2.6%	5.7%

- 2.3. Our data also enables us to understand where young people who are not in employment, education or training population live. The data below

shows this broken down by locality:



This is also shown in more detail on the map in appendix 1.

- 2.4. Our data also tells us the length of time young people spend being Not in Employment, Education or Training. Taking the figures from December:

Total December NEET group by length of time in NEET						
	Total	%	Year 12	%	Year 13	%
0-3 Months	110	34%	30	23%	80	42%
3-6 Months	157	49%	98	75%	59	31%
6-12 Months	27	8%	3	2%	24	13%
12 + Months	28	9%	0	0%	28	15%
	322		131		191	

Although most of those that are Not in Employment, Education or Training have been so for less than 6 months, we do have more than 50 young people in Yr13 who have been Not in Employment, Education or Training for six months or more. Furthermore, the high numbers of young people in Yr 12 who have been Not in Employment, Education or Training for 3-6 months will mostly be young people who have not engaged in employment, education or training since the end of Year 11. Experience tells us that the longer young people are Not in Employment, Education or Training the harder it is to get them to re-engage. The higher numbers of Yr 13 young people who are Not in Employment, Education or Training highlights that some of these will have not continued the education they had been doing in Yr 12.

- 2.5. The Education, Employment and Training Re-engagement Team increasingly finding young people who are Not in Employment, Education or Training are struggling with social interaction, can be reluctant to engage face to face and some even find it difficult to have cameras on during online training. These young people have a range of needs, some of which are medical or diagnosed, whereas others are young people struggling with their emotional wellbeing. As such these young people may be reported as *Not in Employment, Education or Training available* or *Not in Employment, Education or Training not available* depending on their circumstances and may explain why the *Not in Employment, Education or Training not available* (up from 0.54% Dec'23 to 0.65% Dec'24) has not risen as much as the *Not in Employment, Education or Training available* (up from 2.58% Dec'23 to 3.38% Dec'24).

3. What we are doing about this

- 3.1. We have considerable data about our young people who are not in employment, education or training and have been using this to inform our response. We have undertaken several short-term actions aimed at addressing the current situation.
- 3.2. The Education, Employment and Training Re-Engagement team continue to support those young people that become Not in Employment, Education or Training. Since December, 64 young people who were not in employment, education or training have been supported back into employment, education or training. Of those who are no longer Not in Employment, Education or Training, 26 have entered employment, 11 have started education, 10 have started other post-16 provision (i.e. home learning, 1-1 tuition), 7 have found apprenticeships, 6 are doing training, 2 are enrolled in re-engagement support programmes. 8 of these young people had been Not in Employment, Education or Training for six months or more.
- 3.3. We have shared the destination reports with individual schools so that they understand the destinations of the year 11 leavers. Post 16 destination information is part of the Ofsted inspection framework for schools. The Enterprise Co-ordinators, who work as part of the Dorset Careers Hub to support schools' careers leaders, have also received the information on individual schools, to inform their discussions and enable

supportive conversations about those transitioning into post-16 provision in September 2025.

- 3.4. We have shared the information with Inclusion teams within our localities, in particular information on young people who are Not in Employment, Education or Training who were previously electively home educated, in education other than at school, or who were children missing education. Managers from the Education, Employment and Training team continue to meet with Inclusion managers to discuss how to prevent young people not being in employment, education or training.
- 3.5. The Education, Employment and Training team managers also attended a careers leaders meeting recently, organised by the Dorset Careers Hub. This was useful in highlighting to careers leaders which young people to focus on over the next few months to ensure a successful transition into post-16 provision. Our Enterprise Co-Ordinators, who work as part of the Pan-Dorset Careers Hub, are also meeting with specialist Alternative Provision providers to support them in their careers' information, advice and guidance work. This will also enable us to highlight sources of support.
- 3.6. We have been running information events through the Education, Employment and Training team and the Dorset Careers Hub, during the autumn and spring terms targeting those that are already Not in Employment, Education or Training, as well as those currently in year 11 that are vulnerable to becoming Not in Employment, Education or Training from September. These have been well attended and been supported by further education and training providers that might be of interest to young people.
- 3.7. Using funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund we have commissioned Whitehead Ross to deliver Traineeships programmes to support up to 16 young people who are currently Not in Employment, Education or Training with work readiness. The Traineeship programme is targeted at those whose attainment at GCSE is not where we would like it to be and provides support with soft skills such as communication and presentation skills as well as core skills such as English and maths, leading to a qualification at the end.
- 3.8. We have also used some additional funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund to deliver the Marvels 2 programme. This is targeted at young people in Year 11 in receipt of free school meals and supports them with

mentoring throughout year 11 and through the first term of year 12. 84% of participants were able to sustain their post-16 placement for six months, significantly above what we would expect from this cohort.

- 3.9. We continue to actively track the education of all children in care through the Children in Care Inclusion Board which meets every fortnightly during term time, to identify any steps which can be taken to improve access to education.
- 3.10. We know that being in employment, education or training is good for young people's emotional health and well-being. However, some of the young people who are not in employment, education or training face significant barriers to re-engagement. The Education, Employment and Training advisors will employ a range of approaches, working at the pace of the young person, building confidence and finding stepping stones that means that when they do engage in employment, education or training they are able to sustain this.
- 3.11. The Education, Employment and Training team recognise the increased emotional wellbeing issues that our young people who are not in employment, education or training face, the Education, Employment and Training Re-Engagement Team are working with Education Psychologists to develop strategies and approaches to support these young people and identify when additional support is required, and where and when to signpost or refer to other services. The team are knowledgeable about a wide range of other services that young people might need to access, alongside the work to participate in employment, education or training and will arrange warm handovers to ensure the young person is supported to take these up.

4. Longer term work to prevent young people becoming Not in Employment, Education or Training

- 4.1. The Dorset Careers Hub will be hosted by Dorset Council from the end of March as part of the arrangements for the decommissioning of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). This will enable us to better co-ordinate the efforts of the Dorset Careers Hub with our locality teams to support work to prevent young people from becoming Not in Employment, Education or Training, and to align better with the Education, Employment and Training team, for those young people who should be in post-16 provision. For example, we will be able to run joint events providing careers information

advice and guidance targeted at those who may not access this through their education provision or who are not accessing full-time education.

- 4.2. The Dorset Careers Hub have also received a short-term grant to deliver additional work experience opportunities for secondary age pupils in the current academic year. This will be a pilot for the central government's aspiration to ensure that all secondary age children and young people receive at least two weeks work experience during secondary school. This programme will enable us to form links with business leaders and local companies as part of the wider aspiration by Dorset Council in developing an Economic Growth Strategy. The Careers and Enterprise Council, who provide most of the funding for the Dorset Careers Hub, have indicated they expect more funding to support work experience in the next academic year.
- 4.3. Our Education Challenge Team will be working to get alongside the newly merged Weymouth and Kingston Maurward college, as well as other Further Education colleges. Anecdotally, we have heard that some young people were unable to access courses as they did not achieve sufficient grades in English and maths and there was not enough availability of core skills 2 access alternative courses. We will be exploring this to ensure students starting courses in September are not disadvantaged.
- 4.4. We are still undertaking work to define our offer through the learning and belonging teams created as part of our Pathfinder work. There are opportunities here as part of our efforts to be more inclusive of those that find it difficult to access their statutory education and are therefore more likely to become Not in Employment, Education or Training as they get older. An early example of success in this space is the positive feedback from school leaders about the impact of our targeted youth work offer which is already benefiting young people who may have been vulnerable to permanent exclusion from school.

5. Financial Implications

Although no more resource is being provided, there is a wider societal impact of young people not entering employment, education or training as young adults.

6. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications

N/a

7. Well-being and Health Implications

See section 2.5 about emotional health and wellbeing concerns

8. Other Implications

N/a

9. Risk Assessment

- 9.1. HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

10. Equalities Impact Assessment

N/a

11. Appendices

Appendix 1: Distribution of academic age 16- & 17-year-old Dorset residents who are NEET as of December 2024

12. Background Papers

N/a

13. Report Sign Off

- 13.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

Appendix 1: Distribution of academic age 16- & 17-year-old Dorset residents who are NEET as of December 2024

