

CONNEXIONS UPDATE

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 This report provides an update on the Connexions Service.

2. Background

2.1 Under the Education and Skills Act 2008, local authorities have a range of duties to support young people to participate in education or training which are set out in statutory guidance on the participation of young people. Local authorities should have arrangements in place to ensure that 16 and 17 year olds have agreed post-16 plans and have received an offer of a suitable place in post-16 education or training under the 'September Guarantee', and that they are assisted to take up a place.

2.2 In addition, local authorities have a statutory duty to provide CEIAG for groups of students considered to be 'vulnerable'. In Sunderland this service was provided by Connexions historically. On 1 April 2017 the duty to provide CEIAG to vulnerable groups passed to Together for Children and the staff in the Connexions service transferred to TfC.

2.3 The 2011 Education Act made schools and academies responsible for securing independent and impartial careers advice for students from September 2012. The funds to procure this passed from local authorities to the Dedicated Schools Grant and were distributed to schools according to the local formula.

2.4 Originally schools and academies were responsible for securing independent advice for students from Year 9 upwards (age 14+). This was then widened to include students in Year 8 (age 13+).

2.5 Schools and academies are free to commission their independent careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) from any organisation or agency with appropriately qualified staff. They are not obliged to purchase this CEIAG from their local authority. There are several providers in the market and schools and academies should undertake a procurement exercise annually to select their provider.

2.6 The Technical and Further Education Act 2017 made it possible for schools and academies to accredit their own careers programmes and legitimately provide independent CEIAG 'in-house'.

3. Current Position

- 3.1 In Sunderland, some schools have purchased their universal CEIAG from agencies such as South Tyneside College and Zenith People since 2012. Eighteen schools continued to purchase a relatively small number of days' support for this universal advice from the local authority Connexions Service and these service level agreements passed to TfC in April.
- 3.2 CEIAG to vulnerable groups continues to be provided to all schools and academies via the Connexions Service in the Early Years Directorate in TfC.
- 3.3 The vulnerable groups include:
- Young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (SEND)
 - Looked After Children
 - Teenage parents and pregnant teenagers
 - Refugees and asylum seekers
 - Young Carers registered with the Carers Service
 - Young People on Child Protection, Child in Need and Early Help plans who meet the Troubled Families 'financial exclusion' criteria (eg from a workless household)
 - Young people who are electively home educated (although parents do not have to accept the offer)
- 3.4 The duty to report on the following also passed to TfC:
- The 'duty to participate' in education to the age of 18
 - Numbers Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)
 - Numbers whose status is 'Not Known'
- 3.5 The Connexions Service also supports those young people known to be NEET to re-engage them and encourage them towards the jobs market and into training opportunities, and tracks those young people whose status is 'not known' to locate them and similarly encourage them to participate.

4. Connexions data

- 4.1 The table below shows the data in relation to NEETs, Not Knowns and the duty to participate, for the last three academic years:

	Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)		Not Known		Participating in education ('duty to participate')	
	Sunderland	Statistical Neighbours**	Sunderland	Statistical Neighbours	Sunderland	Statistical neighbours
December 2017	3.3%	3.9%	6.0%	2.9%	88.5%	91.1%
December 2016	4.2%	3.8%	2.5%	2.1%	91.4%	92.0%
December 2015*	6.0%	5.2%	3.3%	3.8%	86.2%	86.1%

* 2015 figures include Year 14. The duty to report on Year 14 was removed in 2016.

** Sunderland's statistical neighbours can vary annually, but in 2017 they were: Gateshead, Wakefield, Durham, St Helens, Halton, Barnsley, South Tyneside, Hartlepool, Tameside and Darlington.

4.2 Our nearest statistical neighbour demographically is Gateshead. In December 2017 we compared as follows with Gateshead and our regional neighbours:

	Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)			Not Known			Participating in education ('duty to participate')		
	Sunderland	Gateshead	Regional Neighbours	Sunderland	Gateshead	Regional Neighbours	Sunderland	Gateshead	Regional neighbours
December 2017	3.3%	3.8%	3.9%	6.0%	7.0%	4.0%	Y12 93.7%	95.6%	95.0%
							Y13 82.4%	80.1%	85.8%

4.3 The table above show that:

Sunderland's NEET figures have reduced annually over the last three years.

Our Not Known figures have fluctuated and there is still work to do to track this cohort of young people to ensure that they are meaningfully occupied in employment and/or training.

Compliance with the 'duty to participate' is on a par with our statistical and our regional neighbours.

4.4 Together for Children's Connexions Service, supported by the wider Early Help Service, will continue to focus on our NEET and Not Known population to drive further improvements in this area.

5. Recommendation

5.1 Members are recommended to note the contents of this report.

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