

REPORT AUTHOR:	Jane Wheeler, Early Help Service Manager, Prevention and Innovation
SUBJECT:	Measures to reduce young people who are not in employment, education or training.
PURPOSE:	A report to inform Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee about the measures taken by Together for Children's Prevention and Aspiration Team to reduce the number of young people not in employment, education or training

1. BACKGROUND

High quality careers education and guidance in school or college is critical to young people's futures. It helps to prepare them for the workplace by providing a clear understanding of the world of work including the routes to jobs and careers that they might find engaging and rewarding.

There is a statutory duty (under section 42A of the Education Act 1997) on secondary schools to secure independent careers guidance for students from the year in which many students reach the age of 13 until the end of the school year in which the majority of students reach the age of 18. This equates to the school years 8 to 13. Guidance must include information on education and training options for 16- to 18-year-olds, such as apprenticeships.

The law requires all young people in England to continue in education or training until at least their 18th birthday, although in practice most young people continue until the end of the academic year in which they turn 18.

In September 2016, the Department for Education (DfE) released statutory guidance for all Local Authorities in England relating to the participation of young people in education, employment, or training. The guidance set out a range of statutory duties aimed to help Local Authorities to encourage, enable and assist young people up to the age of 18 (25 for individuals with learning difficulties) to participate in education or training, following on from the Raising the Participation Age (RPA) policy being introduced.

Central to the statutory guidance are responsibilities to both prevent and manage young people who are NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training). Local Authorities have the responsibility to prevent young people who are currently moving through the education system from becoming NEET and to ensure there is a suitable place secured in education or training for all 16 and 17-year-olds, under the September Guarantee.

Together for Children's Careers and NEET service is responsible for fulfilling the duties on behalf of Sunderland City Council.

2. TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN'S CAREERS AND NEET SERVICE

The Careers and NEET Service in Together for Children moved under the direction of the newly formed Prevention and Innovation Service in Early Help in January 2020.

The Careers and NEET service is responsible for the following:

- Supporting Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) young people
- Supporting learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) at key transition stages.
- Supporting identified vulnerable young people through Year 11 to ensure positive post 16 transition
- Tracking young people's participation by ensuring a September guaranteed offer of learning is made to all Year 12 & 13 pupils

- The Activity Survey of Year 11 school leaver destinations

From 1 April 2023 the Careers and NEET Service will be known as the Prevention and Aspiration Team within the Prevention and Innovation Service area of Early Help.

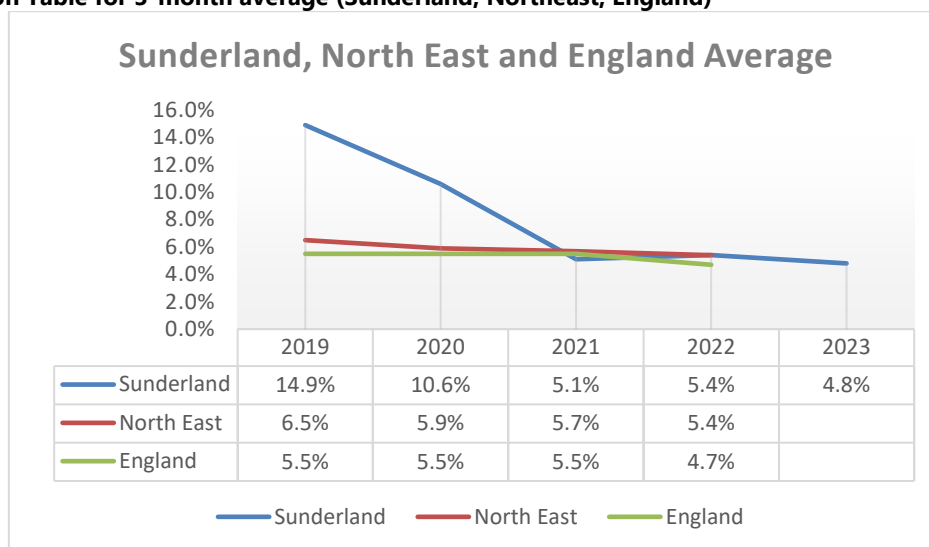
3. PERFORMANCE

The Department for Education measures local authorities' performance based on combined NEET and Unknown figures.

Sunderland Local Authority reports on both NEET and Unknown figures monthly; its annual performance is judged on a three-month average figure taken from December to February each year.

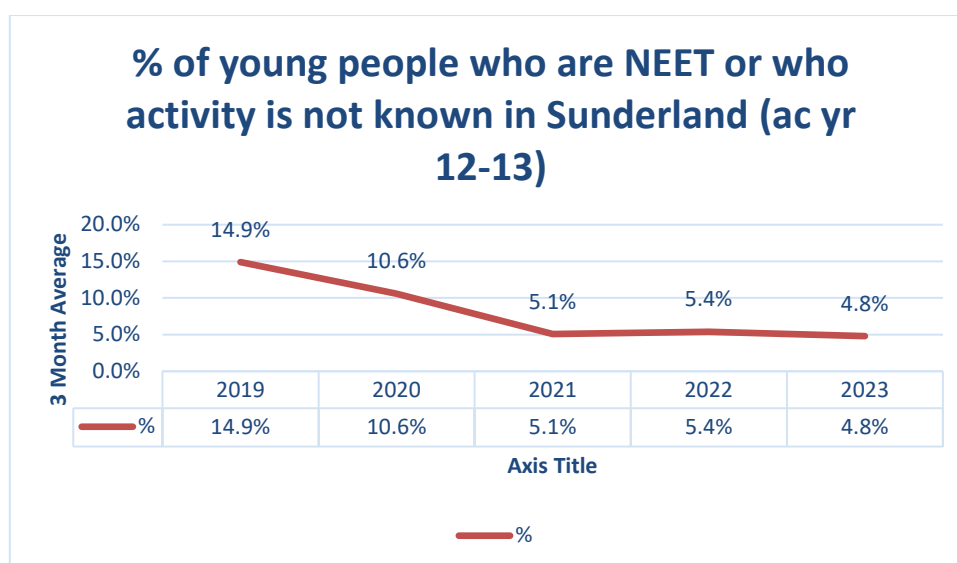
Together for Children's annual performance for 2021/22 was a combined figure of 5.4% (NEET 4.8% and Unknown 0.6%) This is above the England national average (4.7%) and equals the regional average (5.4%), we were listed 7th out of 12 regional Local Authorities in 2021/2022.

Figure 1. Comparison Table for 3-month average (Sunderland, Northeast, England)



Our annual performance for 2022/2023 is a combined figure of **4.8%**, **NEET 4.43%** (281 young people out of a total cohort of 6542) and Unknown 0.36% (23 young people) however 2023 figures nationally have not yet been published so we cannot compare until late in April. **Our performance is 0.6 percentage points lower than last year's (2021-2022) three-month average** and the best it has been in the last five years.

Figure 2. Sunderland Data Table 2019-2023



The NEET/Unknown figure is not a static figure and is not made up of the same young people each month. Figure 3. below shows the combined NEET and Unknown figures from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2023. Although monitored monthly, it is important to note any comparison to previous years as it is useful to show any changes in the group; the figure should not be looked at in isolation.

Figure 3. Monthly Comparison Data – Sunderland



There is always an annual peak during August and September when all year 11-13 are given unknown status, which occurs in every local authority across England. This is a department of education requirement to make these learners unknown as they have ended their learning provision. It is then the Careers and NEET Team's responsibility to track these young people and update records with new learning provision.

4. EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING (EET)

In the period 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022, 11,013 interventions were carried out with Year 10 to Year 14 young people and their families by the Careers Team. This is a 62% increase in interventions compared to the previous year.

Of the 11,013, 2,060 (18.7%) of young people received a substantive contact face to face or virtually. Interventions include providing information, advice, guidance, and support services that are independent, impartial, and confidential and in line with the National IAG Quality Standards, the rest were lighter touch contacts via, text, telephone, or email.

The average percentage of young people in learning over the reporting period of 2021/22 was 90.7%. This is a 1.8% decrease from 2020/2021 when the three-month reporting period was 92.5%. The decrease in learning is believed to be an impact of the second academic year of learning being affected and impacted by the Covid Pandemic.

In 2023, the average percentage of young people in learning in the three-month reporting period is 95.2% (6048 young people), this is an increase 4.5% of young people in learning compared to 2021/2022.

5. MEASURES TO REDUCE NEET

In Sunderland the Careers and NEET Team's overall aim is to reduce the number of young people who are not in education, employment and training. The following activities happen to support this.

- Receive and respond to referrals direct from young people, parents and organisations for careers Information, Advice and Guidance (Figure 4.)
- Target careers and NEET referrals for those at risk of becoming NEET through data from TfC performance team and schools (section 6)
- Careers advisers support the Wear Here 4 You prevention bus sessions in schools and the community.

- Work in partnership with other Together for Children teams including the Virtual School, Youth Offending Service and Next Steps.
- Work in partnership with Educational Establishments, providers and careers provision (Section 8)
- Directly deliver drop-in information sessions to young people in schools, colleges, community venues and on-line.
- Directly deliver drop-in information sessions on apprenticeships throughout the year during apprenticeship week and mailout to all NEET young people to invite them to local sessions.
- Support national campaigns such as National Apprenticeship and National Careers Week via social media platforms and community events.
- Joint work with Sunderland City Network Partnership (Beacon of Light Jan 2023) to support Careers and promote to Year 11 and NEET young people
- Data sharing agreements have been established with EET providers including Colleges, Sixth Forms, Training and Apprenticeship providers (section 7)
- Worked with local business such as Ocado and Howdens to provide opportunities to some of our most vulnerable young people such as young people who are Care Experienced.
- Together for Children directly employ a number of care experience young people on apprenticeships and permanent roles within the services.

6. TARGETED CAREERS AND NEET REFERRALS

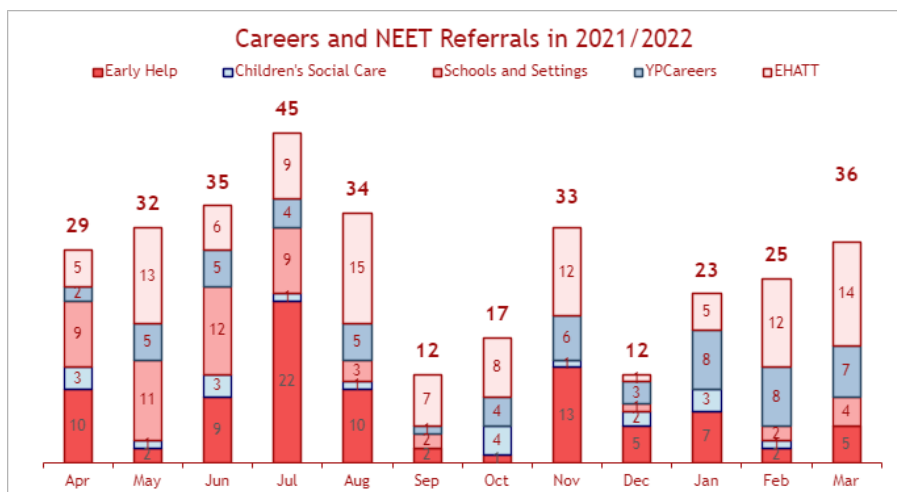
The Careers & NEET service delivers high quality careers advice and guidance to targeted and vulnerable cohorts of young people such as:

- Young People with Education, Health and Care Plans at key transition stages
- Children who are cared for or care experienced
- Children on Early Help Plans who meet the Supporting Families 'financial exclusion' criterion (e.g., from workless households)
- Children on Child Protection (CP), Child in Need (CIN) Plans
- Young Offenders currently supported by the Youth Offending Service
- Pregnant Teenagers, teenage mums and teenage dads involved in the upbringing of their child
- Young Carers (registered with the Young Carers Service)
- Gypsy, Roma or those belonging to the Travelling Community
- Refugees and Asylum Seekers
- Children who are electively home educated (although parents do not have to take up the offer)

Referrals into the team can come directly from young people, parents and carers and any other agencies or professionals involved in working with young people. The agencies / professionals involved in making referrals include Early Help Workers, Social Workers, YOS, Next Steps, CAMHS / CYPS, and SEND Services.

In the period 1 April 2021– 31 March 2022, the team received 333 referrals. The high number of referrals received in the month of July 2021 was in relation to young people seeking EET opportunities after leaving various educational placements, particularly making enquiries about part-time employment. 2022-2023 data will not be available till April 2023.

Figure 4. Careers and NEET referrals



Monitoring and Evaluation

Careers and NEET Early Help Workers monitor and contact their NEET young people (between 2-4 weeks) to offer support with EET progression. Advisers record a NEET analysis on each young person. The analysis includes gathering information from other TfC services and previous providers. Reviews their barriers to engagement, levels of current qualifications, external agencies that are supporting them and the young person's aspirations.

The Team's NEET analysis has identified a number of themes for the Team to focus on in 2023-2024 such as:

- the need to improve communication with young people.
- work with employers and training providers to increase and/or improve available provision.
- the continuing need to respond to the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people.
- the impact of poor mental health among young people was highlighted. While this was widely seen to have been a problem before COVID-19, it has been exacerbated by the pandemic.
- enhanced networking (across neighbouring councils) and higher levels of collaboration, partnership and co-operation across sectors, with school and colleges, and within councils.
- improvements in data collection and monitoring systems to create better alignment and co-ordination of NEET data.
- reviewing and researching of a specific issue or barrier to aid understanding and response e.g., Gaps in training provision

7. SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS AND DATA SHARING AGREEMENTS

Service Level Agreements are in place between the Careers Service and all school / academy educational providers within the city

The Careers and NEET Team works with educational establishments in a collaborative manner, sharing Year 11 intended destinations (Employment, Education or Training – EET) and confirmed destination data when known about leavers from Year 11 entering EET.

The Careers and NEET Team works with neighbouring authorities, especially where young people routinely travel out of the area to access education and training, for work or other services.

Sunderland has a data sharing agreement (DSA) in place with post sixteen educational providers within the city and the wider Northeast area i.e., Durham, Newcastle and Northumberland etc. These educational providers share/confirm curriculum choices and note destination data that will be shared on young people who attend a named institution for the purpose of the Careers Service reporting to DfE only, in addition we receive data from Apprenticeship and other Training Providers who share data with the Careers Service re starters and leavers on programme. This is recorded onto our Careers database for purpose of our required monthly reporting to DfE.

8. WORK WITH SCHOOLS AND PROVIDERS

Careers and NEET Early Help Workers work closely with training providers with each of them having link responsibility to the main Sunderland EET providers / partners. Regular contact is maintained with frequent exchange of information about learners and updates on available and upcoming provision. Reduction in Unknown figure has been achieved as we have found out where these young people were and what provision they were attending.

The Careers and NEET team regularly share opportunities and promote via youth voice social media and a weekly vacancy list which is sent to a regular mailing list of young people. Advisers have attended local training providers to meet with young people who are coming to the end of their course to support with the next steps or progression.

Careers and NEET Early Help Workers work closely with youth providers and have held drops ins or appointments for NEET young people at more locally accessible venues. They regularly visit providers to get updates on courses and opportunities and to view facilities so they can give an honest overview of provision to young people.

Careers and NEET Early Help Workers work closely with training providers to offer supported visits for young people and will arrange to accompany the young people on open days, providers visits and interviews and to act as an advocate for the young person. They will challenge providers to ensure young people receive support needed to fully engage in EET provision.

The Careers and NEET Team Manager attends the Sunderland city network city partnership meeting to share data and gather updates about proposed provision or local updates. They also attend Sunderland secondary careers leader meetings to update schools on data, DfE requirements and information and support we want from schools.

9. CASE STUDY EXAMPLES

Case Study 1.

Joshua was a 2020 school leaver who had been home educated. Post sixteen, he had gone to a training provider and achieved a Level I in Motor Vehicle Repair on route to the Level 2.

During the course, he found an apprenticeship and left the provider. Unfortunately, Joshua had insufficient work experience and the employer had to let him go. The original training provider was unable to offer him a position back on the course as it was full.

Joshua became NEET and needed support to look at other options but was still keen to pursue his chosen career in Motor Vehicle repair. His Careers and NEET Early Help Worker researched Level II Motor Vehicle courses and found something suitable at a local college.

The Careers and NEET Early Help Worker sent Joshua information about this and helped him put in an online application. Joshua kept having doubts as to whether they would accept him on the course, due to his lack of qualifications, however, he was reassured by his Careers and NEET Early Help Worker who kept in touch.

Joshua was successful in getting a place and was able to retake his maths functional skills. He was extremely happy as he had been quite unsure and negative up to this point, thinking he would not get a place. However, he succeeded and went onto achieve his Level II in Motor Vehicle.

Case Study 2.

Support to find the right Higher Education places for Ryan who decided he wanted to study at a Northern University, within reasonable travelling distance from home.

The Careers and NEET Early Help Workers worked with the engagement team at the university chosen by Ryan and managed to get him a contextual offer that reduced the grades he needed to get in. Unfortunately, Ryan, did not achieve the reduced target grades.

The Careers and NEET Early Help Workers organised a meeting with the university admissions team to discuss this, but Ryan, changed his mind about the course and university setting. Ryan, now wanted to attend an out of area University.

After a series of 1-1 interventions working with the young person chatting through his options, looking at the advantages and disadvantages so he could make an informed choice, discussions commenced with Huddersfield University, and he was supported to obtain a course alongside suitable accommodation.

10. FEEDBACK FROM YOUNG PEOPLE AND PROFESSIONALS

“Young person shared with TfC Careers Advisor that they had seen two other private Careers professionals who were engaged within their school, they confirmed that this intervention with TfC Careers Advisor had been the most helpful and that they had been listened to” Young Person.

“Careers are always there for you, offering advice from what career path to take to where to get a bus pass from. The advisers are really friendly and helpful, it’s like having a friend in the know” Young Person.

“Careers Adviser was very, very helpful and easy to understand. She explained everything and myself and my mother was greatly pleased with the advice given. Have come out of a meeting feeling enthusiastic and hopeful. No longer feeling alone in attempting to find a job” Young Person.

“The adviser contact is great, I’m just grateful for the help as I’m a bit lost without the advice. Their approach is perfect and very down to earth” Parent

“Thank you for all your help, I really appreciate it as it helped me overcome my anxiety and start training” young person

“Young person told me that college had not got her email and Careers had been in contact with her and have sorted all of this out for her and young person couldn’t have been more thankful highlighting she wouldn’t have been going to college if it hadn’t been for Careers Service help. Young person has not always felt supported by X school staff so social worker just wanted to say thank you because at this time in this young person’s life and the pressure she feels from school it would have been easy for her to have lost interest and motivation in accessing additional education despite her clear capabilities”. Social Worker – Next Steps.

“Careers Adviser has worked with several pupils from our school. Careers Adviser has demonstrated a range of strategies to support our pupils with many successful outcomes. I must state that her dedication and professionalism with these young people cannot be really stated in this communication – I am amazed with the amount of personal time she has given to support pupils in crisis – this has been commented on by pupils/parents and carers. Her knowledge and understanding have supported my staff in dealing with issues and all of the student support team are always kept “in the loop “with regards to progress” Deputy Head

The allocated careers adviser has been especially proactive and has really advocated for the students who he has worked with. There was a lot of students who we said we could not meet needs for, and he has really been their voice and kept on working with the college to arrange meetings etc and we now have placements for the students which is excellent. (Transition officer Sunderland college)

I was so impressed with your engagement and communication with the young people. The communication and presentation of the NEET and Careers worker was particularly impressive, she knew many of the young people, remembered them and their skills and interests really validating the young people. She was really positive with them and gave them lots of “space and time” to respond to her questions. She was upbeat positive and respectful and the interaction with the young people created a “happy vibe” some of the young people required reassurance about being on the bus and this was readily and sensitively given by TfC workers. (EH Locality Manager)

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Education and Skills scrutiny is invited to:

- Note the content of the report

Jane Wheeler

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March 2023