

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel  
**DATE:** 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021

**CONTACT OFFICER:** Ketan Gandhi  
**(For all Enquiries)** Associate Director, Place Regulation, 01753 875500

**WARD(S):** ALL

### **PART I** **FOR INFORMATION**

#### **YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING**

1. **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to provide the Education and Children Services Scrutiny Panel an overview of young people who are NEET (Not in education, employment and training). For context this report focuses on young people aged 16 to 18 in line with the Raising Participation Age agenda and the statutory duties placed on Local Authorities.

The request asked by the panel has been to provide The NEET Comparison figures on pre-Covid-19 and during / post Covid-19

2. **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Committee is requested to note the report and comment as appropriate on the approaches that have been taken.

3. **The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

3a. **Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

Whilst there is no direct link with the Wellbeing Strategy, the work in supporting young people back in to education, employment or training, there is significant evidence outlining how being NEET impacts on or is a result of mental health issues that young people are facing. The content provided within this report will provide how we focus on this area and as a result provide support to the work of the Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy particularly in relation to ensuring that young people secure the appropriate early help.

3b. **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

The work in supporting young people to be in education, employment and or training, directly associates with the Five Year Plan and contributes to two outcomes:

- *Outcome 1: Slough children will grow up to be happy, healthy and successful*

- *Outcome 3: Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work and stay*

The work primarily focuses on *Outcome 1, Slough children will grow up to be happy, healthy and successful* by supporting children and young people by providing services from an early start.

#### 4. **Other Implications**

(a) Financial

There are no financial implications related to this report.

(b) Risk Management There are no risks identified in this report

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications – None

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment - None

(e) Workforce - As a result of the recent implementation of the Council's operating model, the NEET team will be moving to the Children and Families Service areas with the People (Children's) Directorate from April 1<sup>st</sup> 2021

#### 5. **Supporting Information**

##### 5.1 **Supporting young people to stay in or return to education, employment and or training:**

Nationally there has been the biggest quarterly increase in the number of young people not in education, employment or training in almost a decade. (TES March 2021) The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has said that the latest quarterly increase was the largest since July to September 2021.

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

##### 5.2 Whilst the DfE provides the framework to increase participation and reduce the proportion of young people NEET, responsibility and accountability lies with local authorities. Local authorities have a critical role to play in supporting young people to access education and training – and therefore in understanding the characteristics and current activity of the young people in their area. The role of local authorities is outlined in their broader participation duties, as well as in their Raising the Participation Age (RPA) related duties.

##### 5.3 The DfE monitors the performance of local authorities in delivering their duties and specifically in their tracking and supporting of 16 and 17 year olds, using data collected by authorities and submitted to the National Client Caseload Information System (NCCIS). NCCIS includes data showing the numbers of young people participating in education or training, those who are not participating, those who are NEET or those whose current activity is not known.

5.4 Local authorities have broad duties to encourage, enable, and assist young people to participate in education, employment or training, In addition, ‘Tracking’ young people’s participation is a key element of the duties. Local authorities are required to collect information about young people so that those who are not participating, or are NEET, can be identified and given support to re-engage. Robust tracking also provides the local authority with information that will help to ensure that suitable education and training provision is available and that resources can be targeted effectively.

5.5 Many of our young people tend to work in the sectors hardest hit economically by the COVID pandemic, such as hospitality, leisure and retail and have been most likely to have either lost roles or the roles that would have been normally been entry level jobs for young people no longer existing .

**5.6 Comparing NEET Figures Pre COVID in line with available national figures**

5.7 Table one – National and regional figures Dec 2019 and Dec 2020

Month	Slough				South-east			England		
	Not known	NEET	NEET + Not known	Quintile	Not known	NEET	NEET + Not known	Not known	NEET	NEET + Not known
Dec-19	1.1%	3.0%	4.1%	2	5.0%	2.3%	7.3%	5.0%	2.3%	7.3%
Dec-20	0.6%	4.1%	4.7%	2	5.2%	2.4%	7.6%	3.6%	2.7%	6.3%

5.8 In order to compare national figures in line with the DfE it’s important to combine the NEET and the Unknown figures. This is primarily due to a number of authorities no longer tracking young people, thus reporting low levels of NEET’s but high levels of unknown. Slough’s tracking is of high quality and when taken alone operates in the first quintile of local authorities.

When comparing the last available set of national figures as above, taking the joint figure of NEET’s and Unknowns Slough is operating in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quintile across the country.

Whilst there has been a reduction in our Unknown figure our NEET figure increased by 1.1%. At the time of writing this report the NEET figure has risen to 3.47% which is 136 young people, with a further 45 young people whose status is unknown.

Whilst there has been an increase in the NEET figures for this cohort, it is currently lower than expected. However, sharp increases are expected over the coming year.

Key reasons for the expected increase are as follows:

- Furlough
- Young people not dropping out of education
- Young people choosing to stay in education

5.9 A key barrier to preventing a number of our NEET young people from returning to education, employment and training are the other major issues that they are currently facing in their lives. In reality being supported in facing and overcoming these hurdles are far more of a priority. Many of these young people are in requirement of targeted support to overcome issues of mental health or other key factors and are being supported to address these. Without overcoming some of these hurdles, sustainable education, employment or training is difficult.

5.10 **Actions taken to help support young people back in to education, employment and or training**

5.11 During the COVID period the NEET team have been as inventive as possible in meeting and supporting young people. There has been a significant amount of support with on line face to face interviews as well as where appropriate meeting young people in accessible locations such as parks.

In trying to ensure young people don't become NEET in the first place, the NEET prevention work with identified young people in schools has continued. Again over the year this has taken place either in school or other accessible locations or on line.

The tracking work has remained strong and the team have continued with 'door knocking' when it has not been possible to connect with young people through other mechanisms.

5.12 From April 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 the NEET team and duties will relocate to sit within the People's Directorate (Children) and the team will be working alongside colleagues from early help. It is envisaged that this will make the support for young people securing the right early help and their return to EET become more seamless.

5.13 The Council has been spearheading the development of a Future Skills Hub which is intended to go live in June 2021. A number of key employers and training providers have already joined the steering group. It is envisaged that as part of this work, young people (and adults) will better be able to see and access the various pathways to employment, education and training. The Skills Hub will be located on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of Observatory House and has been developed as a direct response to and as part of the Inclusive Growth Strategy.

5.14 It is envisaged that the pipeline of work coming through regeneration initiative will shortly lead to significant employment opportunities especially in construction. The Skills Hub will be central to linking Slough residents to these opportunities.

5.15 In addition the Skills hub will also provide pathways that will support Slough residents to have better chance of progression through the development of various training pathways that will enhance skills which will address gaps that prevent our residents from currently securing these opportunities

6. **Comments of Other Committees**

- 6.1 This paper has not been presented to other committees; however a specific report relating to young people in care / leaving care will be presented to the Joint Parenting Panel in the near future

7. **Conclusion**

- 7.1 The work undertaken in Slough through a dedicated team supporting young people to either stay in or return to education, employment and or training has been central to us operating at a high level when compared nationally.

- 7.2 The tracking work is off a particular high standard in knowing the EET status of our young people. This really helps us in knowing and targeting those young people who need support.

As many of our NEET young people are facing key issues and challenges in their lives which they need support in overcoming, it is felt that the move of this team to sit with early help will result in seamless support young people to be in EET and make a successful transition in to adulthood.

The creation of the future skills hub is a significant initiative for all Slough residents looking to secure a return to education, employment or training or to secure the skills they need to better their chances of career progression.

8. **Background Papers**

None