

Transitions in Swindon - Increasing the number of young people aged 16-19 participating in learning, reducing numbers not in education, employment and training (NEET) and improving progression into employment

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Introduction

This paper summarises the current outcomes in relation to the participation of 16-18 year olds in learning and NEET and the strategies in place to ensure these measures continue to improve. The paper reflects on the summer 2016 transition, in particular, and the questions raised in a review of data at the Children's Health, Social Care and Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 9th November 2016.

The report summarises the key content of the revised Participation and Progression Strategy for young people 16-18. It should be noted that the work on progression to Higher Education is not covered in this report

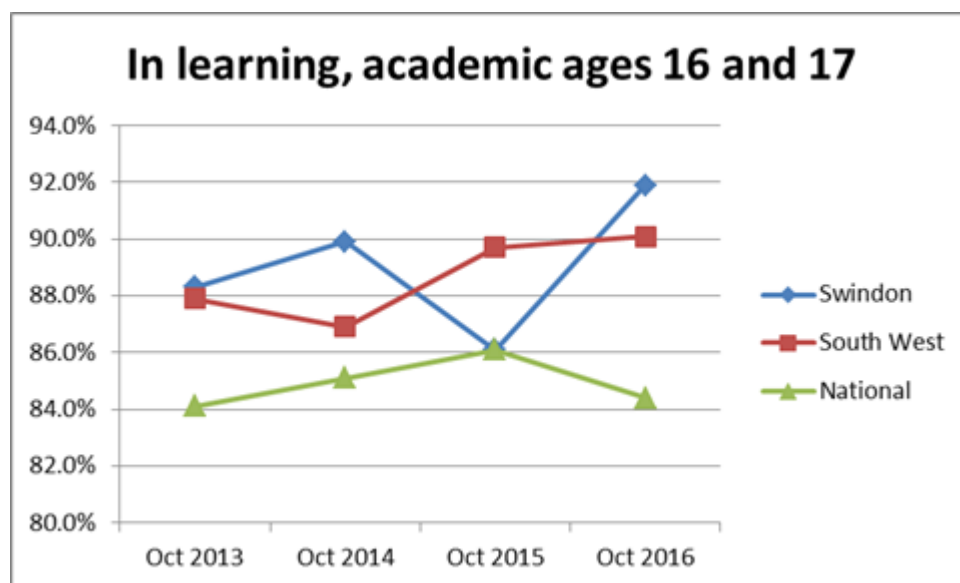
Local and national context

This work falls within the scope of Swindon Borough Council, Priority Two, to "offer education opportunities that lead to the right skills and right jobs in the right places". It supports the statutory duties for which Swindon Borough Council is responsible and which are summarised in the Department for Education document "Participation of young people in education, employment or training, statutory guidance for local authorities, September 2016".

Participation/NEET outcomes

October is the first month of the academic year for which local and national transitions data is reported. Historically, tracking in Swindon has been more efficient than for both England and the South West. Consequently, the gap between Swindon and national performance tends to narrow as the year progresses, as other Local Authorities track greater numbers of young people.

The chart below compares the “in learning” figures for Swindon with those for the South West, and nationally.



The proportion of 16 and 17 year-olds who are in learning (4554 young people) has risen this year to be better than last year, and both local and regional averages. There are only 64 young people in jobs without training, and only 7 of those are academic age 16. Both unknown (223 young people) and Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET, 113 young people) proportions are lower than the national and regional averages.

The Department for Education (DfE) is moving to a single, annual “NEET + unknown” indicator which will be published in 2017 and will be an average of the of November, December 2016 and January 2017 figures. The new indicator will highlight Local Authorities that had previously submitted low NEET figures alongside high rates “unknown”. The October data, ranking Swindon against 150 Local Authorities, reflects the improved “in learning” picture described above.

	In the previous year Swindon was ranked	Swindon is now ranked
<u>In learning</u>	85	31
NEET + Unknown	83	32

Vulnerable Groups

Looked after children and care leavers

		Academic Age 16		Academic Age 17	
Looked After and Care Leavers		OCT-2016	Previous Year	OCT-2016	Previous Year
Numbers	In Learning	18	17	25	24
	NEET	0	2	3	5
	Unknowns	1	3	4	11
Percentages	<i>In Learning</i>	95%	74%	78%	57%
	<i>NEET</i>	0%	9%	9%	12%
	<i>Unknowns</i>	5%	13%	13%	26%

From the ages of 19-21 the employment or training outcomes of care leavers are reported on their birthdays. This data is reported nationally for the year to March. In March 2016 48.9% of Swindon care leavers were in education, employment or training; this compares to the previous year's figure of 33.0% and the national average of 48.0%.

Learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD)

		Academic Age 16		Academic Age 17	
LDD		OCT-2016	Previous Year	OCT-2016	Previous Year
Numbers	In Learning	92	95	96	95
	NEET	6	4	7	7
	Unknowns	4	9	11	23
Percentages	<i>In Learning</i>	89%	87%	83%	74%
	<i>NEET</i>	6%	4%	6%	5%
	<i>Unknowns</i>	4%	8%	10%	18%

Commentary and national comparison

Although cohort sizes are small and all of these groups lag behind their peers in terms of participation, there are currently no 16 year old looked after children or care leavers known to be NEET, though one has still not been tracked to a destination. The Year 13 data is also better than the previous year's. For LDD learners, (increasingly, holders of Educational Health and Care Plans) the data presents a similarly improving picture, with higher proportions in learning and fewer NEET or unknown.

National, comparative data is produced quarterly. The most recent, September data reflects the improving picture described above:

Vulnerable Groups - Comparative figures (OFFICIAL)	Care Leavers	SEND young people (LDD)	
	EET rate (16-18)	In Learning (16-18)	NEET rate (16-18)
Swindon	59%	80%	10%
England	55%	75%	12%

Actions to improve outcomes

The November 2016 Overview and Scrutiny Meeting discussed concerns around:

- More young people with “unknown” post-16 activities
- an increase in the number of young people declaring work without training as their destination
- relatively high numbers of care leavers who are NEET, a large proportion of whom may have a disability.
- The Meeting also requested that this Report contain detail regarding information given to young people with Special Educational Needs.

The number of young people in “unknown” destinations has been significantly reduced through earlier tracking work carried out by Early Help colleagues. The final response to the audit of Youth Engagement Workers (YEW) led to agreed EET-related targets and performance measures for YEW teams, and a dedicated YEW has been deployed to minimise numbers of 16 and 17 year olds in unknown destinations in the future.

Last year, a main contribution towards the rising numbers in jobs without training was identified as young people leaving Swindon and New Colleges after one year. Through the Raising Participation Group, both Colleges presented detailed plans intended to reverse this pattern. In both cases this has involved staff restructuring and better tracking and support for young people. The launch of two European Social Fund (ESF) programmes to support NEETs, “Your Time” and “Building Bridges” projects, has added another set of resources geared towards moving NEET young people into appropriate, and therefore in learning, destinations.

A new Virtual Headteacher is in post, and has introduced a more rigorous approach to post-16 Personal Education Plans (PEPs) for Children in Care with a clear focus on progression. A more streamlined hand-over process from Virtual School to Care Leaver teams is now in place and the Routes to Employment

team is working with the Care Leaver team to ensure an increasing focus on developing employability skills with a goal of finding employment.

A successful pilot with Wiltshire College introduced supported internships to a small number of learners in 2015/16. Investment in training and support for supported internships has resulted in more providers including this offer for learners with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and more learners enrolled on supported internships for 2016/17.

A review of all year 11 pupils in EOTAS will ensure that those young people who require additional support in Further Education settings are assessed and if required will have an EHCP.

All young people with an LDA who are continuing in learning beyond September 2016 have been identified and assessed for an EHCP.

The SEN assessment team have been reconfigured to ensure continuity for all learners post 16 as the EHCP no longer ceases automatically when a young person leaves school.

The online website “My Care, My Support” is maintained to provide information and advice the provision and support for young people with special educational needs and disabilities. This includes an online marketplace with over 350 providers which enables young people to access services directly.

Challenges and opportunities

Through the development of an updated Raising Participation Plan, the Local Authority is well-placed to remain ahead of the national average for key indicators at 16 and 17. The partnership with providers is well-established and providers, including Schools and colleges, share the same participation priorities. The new Plan will quantify the agreed contributions needed from partnership members (Colleges, School Sixth Forms, Other Providers and Youth Engagement Services) in an overall performance framework. The re-purposing of a YEW role to include more ownership of the cohort whose destinations remain unknown, in particular, should be effective in continuing to drive down the “NEET + unknown” figure.

The Skills and Employment Partnership has reviewed the overall structure of its sub groups so that there is one group focusing on ‘Skills for Inclusion’, encompassing the NEET agenda for 16-18 year olds and progression to work for a wider age range who are disadvantaged in the labour market. This will support a more coherent approach to meeting needs of young people and adults and maximise the use of funding.

The Post 16 Area Review¹ has provided an opportunity to highlight strengths and areas for improvement across the Wiltshire and Swindon area. Improving educational outcomes by 19 and specifically outcomes in English and Maths and ensuring providers work together to improve progression to sustainable work for vulnerable groups including the SEND group and care leavers is one of the recommendations that the two Local Authorities have put forward. .

Threats to continued progress, which will be incorporated into a new Raising Participation Plan risk register, include:

- Risk of Youth Engagement capacity being reduced as a consequence of the current service review
- Post-16 partners, often for financial reasons, being unable to maintain a broad curriculum offer, especially for the less academically successful
- High numbers of learners with an EHCP aged 16-18 in Swindon schools (20.6% as at 21/01/16 compared to 8.6% in England) impacting on the capacity of services and providers to meet the needs of this group.
- Pressure on the high needs budget to meet the needs of an increasing number of young people aged 16-19 from 176 in January 2016 to 316 in September 2016.

The Local Authority remains responsible for Care Leavers and young people with EHCPs to the age of 25. With some evidence that fewer adults in Swindon who have a learning disability are in employment, the Transitions Transformation Programme has been launched, with Routes to Employment leading the work-stream focusing on moving more young people, in particular, into EET destinations. For Care Leavers, Routes to Employment has led the development of a pilot programme designed to help the Care Leaver team to better improve the employability skills of Care Leavers.

¹ The Post 16 Area Review is part of the government's national approach to reforming Further Education. The review focuses on the financial sustainability of Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges and involves the Local Authority providing input on how well current provision is meeting the needs of employers and learners and recommendations moving forward. Swindon, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire are in Wave 4; the review started in September 2016 and is due to be completed in February 2017.