



CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EDUCATION DIRECTORATE

Engagement and Progression Strategy

**Ensuring young people's involvement in
education, training and employment pre
and post 16 (NEETS)**

2021-2024

Purpose	To set out Caerphilly's arrangements and intentions to ensure that young people are able to positively progress into education, employment or training post 16.
Owner	CCBC Education Directorate
Related	Destinations, Transition, Wellbeing, Inclusion strategy (Exclusions, Behaviour, EOTAS), guidelines and policies
Review Frequency	Annual

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1.1 Overview

Young People's transition beyond secondary school is a significant period, both developmentally and vocationally – we have a collective responsibility to ensure that young people reach employment, education and training destinations suitable to their and society's needs.

Young people who find themselves not in education, employment or training between the ages of 16 and 18 are much more likely to be unemployed in the future, receive low income, suffer from poor physical and mental health, depression and possibly find themselves involved in crime. It is vital that we work together to maximise the contribution that all young people can make to their families, communities and the economy of the County Borough and the country.

This strategy describes the priorities and criteria associated with the engagement of young people from the age of 11 to ensure their progression in education, training and employment post 16 and how we will engage with those either NEET or potentially NEET, including by acknowledging and addressing their circumstances, abilities and vulnerabilities.

Welsh Government's Engagement and Progression framework guidance (2013) is applied in Caerphilly and sees significant activity that leads to positive outcomes. Though there are established arrangements in place for the identification of those with potentially limiting vulnerabilities and the improvement of their prospects, more needs to be done and this strategy points to how this can be accomplished. It is vital that all young people secure and sustain positive destinations after leaving compulsory education.

Though focussed on the prevention of NEET (not in Education, Employment or Training) status, Caerphilly's approach is very much about fostering a positive approach towards our young people and, therefore, is focussed on taking all necessary actions to ensure their wellbeing – we know by experience that this approach is the best way to secure positive outcomes in any and all aspects of their lives.

This strategy has been developed collaboratively with all key stakeholders, identifying key criteria in relation to increasing engagement and progression and thus reducing the chances of young people becoming NEET.

1.2 Acknowledging and responding to barriers in progression

There are a number of factors that can contribute to young people not achieving their potential or failing to thrive more generally, all of which impact their prospects regarding education, employment and training. Some of these factors relate to vulnerabilities that young people may have as a consequence of their personal histories and some may be more systemic in nature.

Working with our Education services and providers, including Careers Wales, training providers and all those whose activities include improving the wellbeing of young people, it is recognised that identification and intervention are vital in supporting young people in their learning and enabling them to reach their potential.

Activity is therefore twofold: to prevent young people becoming NEET in the first instance and to reengage those who find, for whatever reason, that their future, imminent or current inclusion in the world of education, training or work is particularly challenging.

The vision and aspiration in Caerphilly is that all young people will make a successful transition to further learning, training or employment and develop the skills that will enable them to succeed in adult life and reach their full potential.

Our focus is on young people in secondary education, 11-19 years, though not excluding those 19-24. This approach aligns with Welsh Government's Youth Engagement and Progression Framework – Caerphilly's Engagement and progression arrangements are intrinsic to CCBC's overall NEETs strategy.

This Strategy is therefore based on the six key priorities as outlined in Welsh Government's Youth Engagement and Progression Framework guidance. These are to:

- Identify young people most at risk of disengagement
- Improve the brokerage and co-ordination of support
- Improve the tracking systems which lead to more effective transition
- Tailor provision to better meet the needs of young people
- Strengthen employability skills and opportunities for employment
- Ensure greater accountability for all stakeholders

By clearly developing activity in relation to these priorities, we will continue to reduce the number of young people who spend time outside of education, employment or training and the significant impact that this has on the quality of their future lives, health, well-being and

self-esteem.

1.3 Related guidance

Our collective efforts in Caerphilly support and are supported by wider legislation and guidance, including the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework [YEPPF] (2013) which provides a delivery model centred on the needs of young people, outlining the clear responsibilities of local authorities, schools, Careers Wales and a range of organisations to provide better outcomes for young people.

Hidden Ambitions (2017) – ‘an active offer of education, work or training as they make the leap into adulthood’ is an integral aspect of our commitment to care leavers. The Authority’s Cynydd scheme, for example, provides care leavers with opportunities for traineeships within the council’s various departments.

The current National Youth Work Strategy guides the work of Caerphilly Youth where responsibility for the coordination of NEETs-reduction activity is located. Youth work frequently complements the formal education offer from schools, supporting improvements in behaviour, attendance and progression through key points of transition.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) is significant in that it requires us to carry out sustainable development, ensuring that the needs of future generations are not compromised. In Caerphilly, the contribution our priorities for action make towards the seven national objectives are embedded within the Public Service Board’s Wellbeing Plan.

The strategy is also firmly embedded within policies and processes that support the progression of the Local Authority education priorities. This includes the annual Service Improvement Plan that specifies targets for improvement, tracking and monitoring the impact of actions on a termly basis. Other integral documentation includes the LA Inclusion and Wellbeing strategy and the EAS Business Plan. Performance measures are regularly updated in the Directorate Performance Assessment and shared with Corporate Management Team, Scrutiny and Cabinet committees.

2.1 Definition of NEET

The term NEET refers to young people who are not engaged in education, employment or training at the age of 16 and beyond. It is often used to describe young people who are disengaged from learning or employment and have become marginalised from society.

NEET young people are as diverse as any group and includes those who are economically

inactive (out of work, not actively looking for work and not looking to start a job). Some of these young people may have caring responsibilities and/or other complex needs. Very broadly, there are three categories of NEET young people:

- Those who are soon likely to participate in education or training or secure employment
- 'Undecided NEET', who do not face significant personal barriers to participating in education or training, but are dissatisfied or unaware of the available opportunities
- Those who face significant personal and structural barriers and are likely to remain NEET for some time

The frequency and the length of periods experienced as NEET can have a significant and negative impact on a young person's future prospects.

It is recognised that young people can become NEET at any time. Studies highlight the importance of recognising that young people who are NEET have different characteristics and complex needs. The local context and characteristics of the groupings of young people who are NEET are central to identifying the key ingredients for appropriate support.

2.2 Why do Young People become NEET?

Young people are much more likely to become NEET if they:

- have learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- are Male;
- have been in care or had family problems including living in an environment that is not conducive to employment, education or training;
- have been bullied;
- are homeless;
- have health problems;
- have a record of drug or alcohol abuse or crime;
- have been persistent absentees from school;
- do not have many qualifications;
- have low levels of basic, key and/or employability skills;
- have financial problems;
- have dependants;

- are young carers;
- fail to make a successful transition to further education, training or work after compulsory education finishes;
- have poor relationships with their Schools/Teachers
- have experienced trauma as a result of having had Adverse Childhood Experiences such as Verbal abuse, Physical abuse, Sexual abuse, Parental separation, Household domestic violence, Household mental illness, Household alcohol abuse, Household drug use, or the incarceration of a household member

Young People can become NEET due to a variety of reasons and circumstances. Transition past the age of 16 is a significant period in all young peoples' lives, and our support is vital to ensure that the risk of young people becoming NEET is reduced or removed.

Children and young people may be classed as vulnerable for a variety of reasons and such vulnerabilities and the life experiences that can accompany them can significantly influence an individual's life, including their post-16 future. A number of these vulnerabilities are acknowledged within CCBC's vulnerability assessment tool, STRIVE:

- Persistent absenteeism
- Low levels of attainment
- Number of exclusions and days excluded
- Additional learning needs
- Free school meals status
- Looked after status
- Number of school moves in the last two years
- English as an additional language

There a number of others which can also be influential and form a part of the assessment arrangements of various agencies within CCBC and by its partner groups, though not necessarily by all schools. These include:

- Caring for a sibling, parent or partner
- Pregnancy or parenting
- Substance misuse
- Physical/mental illness/disability
- Homelessness
- Poverty
- Offending

- Low self esteem
- Domestic Violence
- Adverse Childhood Experiences

2.3 Assessing vulnerability

Schools and Inclusion services - Year 9 to Year 11

Pastoral leads or heads of year in all secondary schools identify learners who may be vulnerable or showing signs of disengagement. Following assessment and referral, Education Inclusion Services will determine the level of vulnerability and concern. Where appropriate, the Engagement and Progression Coordinator (EPC) arranges services to provide lead worker support for the young person.

Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF)

Caerphilly's Youth Engagement and Progression Framework aims to help all young people overcome the challenges they face so that they all have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. It coordinates activity and intervention and harnesses capacity by incorporating multiple agencies and workers to ensure a sufficiency of support for those young people in need of it. A young person-centred network of agencies responds to those identified as at risk of disengagement and provides the right level of intervention and support to help them make sustained progress.

The Engagement and Progression framework underpins Caerphilly NEETs approach but links in with the work of many others including schools, education Inclusion services and school improvement services.

3.1 Partnerships

To successfully reduce the number of young people who are NEET and achieve sustained employment, continued commitment to working in partnership is needed from all those involved in supporting young people in Caerphilly. Partners vital to this success to date and in the future include all the mainstream Secondary schools, Coleg Y Cymoedd, Coleg Gwent, CCBC's Adult and Community Learning (ACL) Service, Careers Wales, participating Youth Support Services from all sectors, Job Centre Plus, employers (including CCBC), health professionals, parents and peers.

Examples of NEET partnership working and processes:

Young person	Issues	Process	Outcome
15 years, school disengagement, family issues, isolated	<p>Poor Teacher/adult relationships</p> <p>Falling school attendance</p> <p>Poor GCSE prospects</p> <p>Risk of school exclusion</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Intervention coordinated via Engagement and Progression system Head of Year 11. 2. LEI liaison provides wider picture of personal circumstances, characteristics/history 3. Introductions made to Youth project. 4. Regular links with Lead Worker support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Managed increase in school attendance ✓ Interests/skills assessed ✓ Progression arrangements to FE initiated ✓ Regular community support addresses social isolation
14 years, behavioural challenges in school	<p>Poor Teacher/School relationships</p> <p>Presents as aggressive and uncooperative</p> <p>Poor academic engagement</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coordination between Engagement and Progression Coordinator and School Counselling Service/Educational Psychology 2. Out of school link with Lead Worker established 3. ACEs-related trauma identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ School coping strategies coproduced, including anger management ✓ Trauma-informed Youth Service support arrangements set up in community and for family ✓ Vocational and personal interests developed
13 years, poor academic engagement	<p>No significant relationships with peers or adults</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engagement and progression panel brokers Lead Worker support 2. Subsequent engagement assesses vulnerabilities and establishes supportive professional relationship 3. Lead Worker coordination with School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ LGBT support group links established ✓ Homelessness prevention support provided ✓ Academic reengagement

4.1 Priorities for improvement

Our criteria for success are defined within the Engagement and Progression framework's 6 key priorities.

Priority 1: *Identifying young people most at risk of disengagement*

Criteria
Children's/Young People's vulnerabilities are acknowledged across School and LA systems.
Transition arrangements beyond Year 11 are thorough and consistent.

Priority 2: *Better brokerage and Co-ordination of Support*

Criteria
Membership and contribution by agencies linked to the Engagement and Progression Framework activity is reviewed, expanded and enhanced.
Lead Worker function is maintained, developed and effective.
Young people are engaged in the review and improvement of services.
Brokerage arrangements below Year 10 and beyond school age are extended to widen support.

Priority 3: *Stronger tracking and transition of young people through the system*

Criteria
Information sharing between CCBC and key partners is strengthened.
Destination information is accurate and used to inform planning.
A coordinated approach supports transition between provision, key stages of compulsory education, and movement from pre to post 16
Care Leavers are effectively tracked to ensure support is in place to access education, employment or training.

Priority 4: *Ensuring provision meets the needs of young people*

Criteria

All young people of secondary school age have access to social and emotional support, inclusive of those educated in schools, PRUs/EOTAS/home educated.
All educational services, including schools, are ACEs aware/ACEs assess all pupils at risk of exclusion or NEET.
Young people's participation, within the planning and delivery of all services, is embedded and effectively targeted at young people who are NEET.
An entitlements-based approach to young peoples' access to vocational support and guidance is adopted.

Priority 5: *Strengthening employability skills and opportunities for employment*

Criteria
Strong links exist between education providers and business to ensure that labour market intelligence informs curricula and provision planning.
The delivery of employability skills are effectively promoted.
Traineeship and apprenticeship opportunities and effectively promoted.
Enterprise and entrepreneurship activities in education services, including schools are effectively promoted.

Priority 6: *Greater accountability for better outcomes for young people*

Criteria
Priority actions embedded within – Corporate performance measurement arrangements The Education Directorate's Service Improvement Plan
Effective partnership work with schools towards ongoing self-evaluation processes related to NEET performance, outcomes and processes.
All engaging organisations to be supported to achieve the Participation kitemark

5.1 Roles and responsibilities

Local Authority staff – school improvement/Youth

<p>Strategic Lead for School Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic overview of NEETS strategy • Ensuring appropriate support and challenge to Senior Youth Service manager • Strategic representation to corporate education and wider services. • Link with Estyn (LALI) • Ensure NEETS strategy embedded within wider strategic planning (e.g. SIP, self-evaluation). • Harmonise NEETS across other service areas within the education directorate. • Contribute to NEETS strategy meetings. 	<p>Senior Youth Service Manager</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure funding for all NEETS related work, including Coordinator role and Lead Worker team. • Respond to need arising from Lead Work across the Authority area in terms of providing training • Represent E + P to WG • Restructure the service to properly support this area of work • Otherwise promote NEETS considerations throughout the youth service, including tying-in NEETS targets to the work of various teams, including the Youth Forum • Support engagement and progression coordinator in ensuring partnership with schools.
<p>Engagement and progression coordinator</p> <p>EARLY IDENTIFICATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet schools and providers on a half-termly basis to identify ‘at risk’ NEET young people and arrange support and finalise destinations. STRIVE reports are used for meetings and are attended by EWOs, Careers Wales and Heads of Year or Manager. Meeting minutes are shared by secure E Mail. It is likely that YOS will shortly be attending some of these meetings. - Current Tier 1 and Tier 2 NEET young people details, supplied by Careers Wales Hub, are updated on a monthly basis, leading to liaison with partners to ascertain whether or not young peoples’ status has changed Careers Wales notified accordingly. <p>BROKERAGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organise support for identified pupils e.g. Inspire to Achieve programme, youth work support via Cardiff Met student placements, trips to post 16 provision, referral to HPAD, college taster sessions, college placements, the Youth Forum and support from current youth service provision e.g., Cross Keys College - Ensure relevant pupils provided with a suitable destination, aligned with support provided as necessary. - Locate Tier 1 and Tier 2 NEETs via phone or house visits. Discuss options and arrange support and provision - Organise 2 Live Vacancy events per year to enable young people to make considered choices 	

- Organise appropriate support for SPACE panel referrals, liaising with 16 Plus Social Services, CAHMS, Supporting Family Change, Youth Service projects, Schools, Colleges, Charities, Parents, Behavioural Support, EOTAS team, Providers, IAA.

TRACKING PROGRESS

- Monthly discussions about young people's progress through monthly YEPF meetings and LPFS
- Download monthly Tier reports and update
- KIT phone calls with most vulnerable pupils.
- Regular phone calls to Tier and Tier 2 NEETs in partnership with HPAD.
- Withdrawal reports from colleges
- Reconciliation of Careers Wales listed year 11 NEETs. This involves locating the individuals, identifying their status and sending updates to Careers Wales

PROVISION

- Visit providers on regular basis to discuss learners' progress
- Promote and publicise provision through social media

EMPLOYABILITY

- Support young people into EET via referrals to projects, assistance with college applications, college staff appointments, Careers Wales appointments, transport to venues, taster sessions, appointments at Live Vacancy events, one to one phone call appointments

ACCOUNTABILITY

- Via monthly YEPF meetings and Lead Practitioner Forums.
- Twice yearly reports to Welsh government
- Monthly Tier reports
- Year 11 NEETs figure
- Education Scrutiny

<p>Lead Education Welfare Officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure meetings between EWOs and schools take place and are productive. (appropriate support and challenge) • Contribute to NEETS strategy meetings. 	<p>Educational Welfare Officers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend half-termly meetings with Engagement and Progression coordinator and schools. • Work with those pupils who are at risk of being <i>NEET</i> due to low attendance as per EWS case management and attendance meetings with the school •
<p>Principal Information Officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality assure the data process. • Work with secondary schools to set appropriate yearly targets relating to reducing the number of NEETS. 	<p>Data Officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly support to engagement and progressions coordinator in preparing summary reports. • Update monthly tracking data sheets identifying pupil destinations and

	monitoring progress towards securing destinations.
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Local Authority staff – other services

<p>Inclusion Services including - Educational Psychology Behavioural support LAC team</p>	<p>The educational psychology service will enquire at the secondary school planning meetings whether there are any pupils at risk of becoming NEET and look to offer advice where appropriate.</p>
	<p>An annual planning meeting will be held with each secondary school to discuss vulnerable learners and provide advice and guidance or signpost school staff.</p> <p>Our Post-16 Champion will liaise with John Poyner, the Engagement and Progression Officer to provide any advice as appropriate and as required to support planning for pupils at risk of becoming NEET, where difficulties have arisen with this planning process.</p>
<p>EOTAS</p>	<p>During transition to EOTAS provision, colleagues meet the student, their family and professionals who may have worked with the young person in another capacity, to develop a pathway plan. Whilst there is a focus on present need and relevant interventions necessary, a significant area discussed is progression. Targets are mutually agreed with monitoring and review dates to ensure the plan is kept on track. Staff at all provisions work with the students and family to ensure an appropriate pathway is both researched and accessible. Staff continue to work with many of students, for a set period, once they have passed compulsory school leaving age. Specifically, they help with transition ensuring the student is making progress in their new pathway before withdrawing such support.</p>
<p>Families First organisations YOS Social Services (Inc. post 16 team) Youth Service teams Communities for Work I2W</p>	<p>A Lead Worker (Engagement and Progression terminology for any professional providing key support) provides direct support/assistance, information and knowledge and coordinates with the YEPF coordinator to update on progress.</p> <p>Engagement varies considerably in type, location and length of intervention, depending on the young person's needs, the setting/context and history of intervention.</p>

External Services

<p>Careers Wales</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange careers talks and group sessions for Year 8 or 9s • Interview pupils following teacher or self-referral • Organise and action Year 10 career checks • Keep in touch with Year 10 and 11 pupils via text or phone regarding their destinations and plans • Attend school assemblies to deliver talks • Liaise with Careers Wales Business Engagement team to organise school Employer visits • Attend half-termly meetings with EPC and other agencies • Work closely with EPC to support at risk pupils into destination • Attend Year 8 and 11 parents evenings • Organise and manage Inspire to Achieve(6 schools) • Deliver 2 standard group sessions about the labour market in Wales and post 16 options • Publish destination information for Years 11,12 and 13
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<p>Work based learning providers</p> <p>Further Education providers</p> <p>Drug and Alcohol agencies</p> <p>Housing services/providers</p> <p>3rd sector youth projects</p> <p>Armed Forces support structures</p> <p>DWP</p>	<p>A Lead Worker (Engagement and Progression terminology for any professional providing key support) provides direct support/assistance, information and knowledge and coordinates with the YEPF coordinator to update on progress.</p> <p>Engagement varies considerably in type, location and length of intervention, depending on the young person's needs, the setting/context and history of intervention.</p>
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Schools

<p>Headteachers</p> <p>Pastoral Leads</p> <p>Support staff</p>	<p>Any member of school staff can function as a Lead Worker, providing a central point of contact and responsibility for particular pupils that are a concern.</p>
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<p>Learning Coaches</p> <p>Youth Workers</p>	<p>Consultation records between the lead worker and the school identify agreed actions for all stakeholders and monitor the impact of the work on the young person.</p> <p>Self-evaluation processes consider the effectiveness of provision for pupils at risk of NEET.</p>
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6.1 Evaluation – how we will know if our efforts are working

This strategy sets out the actions required to deliver on the council’s responsibility to reduce the likelihood of young people not thriving during their school years or after the age of 16 and becoming NEET. It is important that we have a shared understanding of the reasons young people might become NEET and the measures outlined allow us to gauge the effectiveness of this understanding.

Data gathered from across education and elsewhere will inform the effectiveness of the strategy. This data will be considered collectively in order to properly evaluate the work and the performance of all contributors.

The impact of our current and proposed interventions will be constantly evaluated and modified as necessary. Evidence from a broad range of sources will be considered, most especially from young people, to help us understand how effective our interventions have been and to properly assess our shared commitment and resolve to improving the educational and vocational life chances of young people.

6.1 Appendices

Appendix 1: NEETS data figures (2012-2021)

Year	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
%age	5.9	4.4	3.5	2.1	1.9	2.6	2.2	2.4	1.7

Appendix 2: Example of consultation record.

Tracking and monitoring NEETS

Procedures and pupil review

Date of Review:

School name			
Lead Officer			
School contact/representative			
Overall NEETs target (current year)/agreed local target	TBC		
Previous year RAG data/performance		Current data	
Update on actions from previous meeting			
Points for discussion	<p>To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Live Vacancy activity by at risk cohort • Post 16 provider visits • Links to Youth Service/external/community • Anti-disengagement strategies/Exclusions/ACEs issues/YOS interventions • New school interventions – I2A/Upstream/homelessness 		
Pupils at risk	<p>To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions and Lead workers recorded in spreadsheet tracker • Identify non-attenders • Managed moves/other moves (confirm location) • Year 12/13 • LAC/ALN issues • Confirmation of Lead Worker arrangement 		
Recommendations for the service area / School staff and / or whole Directorate / other teams following the review			
Progress to target			
Date of next meeting			

Appendix 3: Careers Wales 5 tier model

Tier	Client Group
Tier 5 Young People in Further Education, Employment or Training (EET)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustaining education, employment or training (EET). • Working or studying part time over 16 hours. • Voluntary Work.
Tier 4 Young People at risk of dropping out of EET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those engaged in less than 16 hours of EET. • Those who have been identified at risk of disengagement pre-16 and/or were judged as at risk of not making a positive transition who are subsequently in FE, sixth form or training. • Those who have been made aware to CW by EET providers (or themselves) as at risk of dropping out of EET.
Tier 3 Unemployed 16 and 17 year olds known to Careers Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged with CW and/or known to be actively seeking EET; either ready to enter EET, or assessed as requiring career management or employability skills support to enter EET. • This tier should also include those known to CW, actively seeking EET but not requiring CW enhanced support i.e. accessing support via CW.com, awaiting a college start date etc.
Tier 2 Unemployed 16 and 17 year olds, known to Careers Wales, who are not available for EET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young person not available/ unable to seek EET (sickness, young carers, pregnancy, custody). • Young people with significant or multiple barriers requiring intensive personal support.
Tier 1 Unknown status on leaving Careers Wales services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people unknown to Careers Wales.