



CABINET - 21ST JULY 2021

SUBJECT: ENGAGEMENT AND PROGRESSION (NEETS) STRATEGY

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval from Cabinet for the new Engagement and Progression (NEETs - Not in Education, Employment or Training) Strategy and associated matters, and seek Cabinet Members' views prior to adoption.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report introduces the new Engagement and Progression (henceforward in the report referred to, for brevity, as 'NEETs') Strategy (Appendix 1). The NEETs Strategy has been developed in consultation with Local Authority (LA) staff, Head Teachers, Young People, and members of Caerphilly's Engagement and Progression framework.
- 2.2 The NEETs Strategy clearly states the collective approach to engaging with the associated issues across multiple agencies, as well as outlining the reasons for young people becoming NEET and the associated consequences.
- 2.3 The NEETs Strategy describes the roles and responsibilities of stakeholder providers of support both within and external to the Authority. Collaboration and partnership working are key to successfully engaging with NEETs-related matters and therefore the scope of the strategy, whilst being inclusive of most Education services, involves CCBC services outside the Education Directorate and many external bodies. The strategy also flags the necessary criteria for success associated with the six priorities contained within the Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF), Caerphilly's core structure for addressing NEETs issues, based on Welsh Government guidance of the same name.
- 2.4 Few strategies exist in isolation: The NEETs strategy is informed by key internal and external initiatives and realities, examples of which would include the Education Directorate's Inclusion Compendium and Careers Wales' annual statistics relating to the numbers of young people who become NEET at the point of leaving compulsory education, as well as an increasing focus by Estyn on the performance of secondary

schools and LAs with regards to the securing of appropriate destinations for young people who are 16 years of age or more. Appendix 2 details the authority's NEETs performance figures over a five year period to give context to the present levels of NEETs incidence.

- 2.5 The NEETs strategy, taken as a standalone statement of intent, aims to provide a collective focus by the various contributing services on the fortunes of young people who might otherwise not transition successfully to 6th Form, Further Education, work-based learning or employment and who might otherwise become disengaged from their communities and society. However, accompanying the core document are supplementary resources that help to underpin the nature of the collective effort by defining the NEETs-related roles and responsibilities of contributing services and offer guidance as to the workings of the various accompanying systems.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Cabinet:

1) approves the new Engagement and Progression (NEETs) Strategy.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To enable officers to embed the Council's new Engagement and Progression (NEETs) Strategy into practice.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The new NEETs strategy aligns with other strategies and guidance both locally and nationally and, for example, complements the content of the Inclusion Compendium, particularly in identifying the pitfalls of young people's exclusion from school and in the wider sense, and the national Engagement and Progression guidance to which all LAs work.
- 5.2 Above all, the new NEETs strategy aims to support not just young people at risk of becoming NEET but the efforts of all participating services and agencies and of course, Secondary schools.
- 5.3 The NEETs Strategy acknowledges existing strands of work and outlines the criteria for successfully developing this work within the context of the Engagement and Progression Framework priorities.
- 5.4 The six defined Engagement and Progression priorities are listed below –
- 1) Identifying young people most at risk of disengagement
 - 2) Better brokerage and coordination of support
 - 3) Stronger tracking and transition of young people through the system
 - 4) Ensuring provision meets the needs of young people
 - 5) Strengthening employability skills and opportunities for employment
 - 6) Greater accountability for better outcomes for young people
- 5.5 The NEETs strategy attaches various criteria for success to each priority. Each criterion has been selected as a consequence of debate, and subsequent agreement, with key partners across Caerphilly's Engagement and Progression

framework and phrased so as to coincide with and support related workstreams within Education and elsewhere.

- 5.6 The NEETs strategy provides the impetus to both bolster, refine and develop those existing systems and arrangements which mitigate against young people becoming NEET, for example by bringing more practitioners to bear on the issue and by strengthening the focus on key transition arrangements such as those post 16.
- 5.7 Underpinning the Strategy's overall principles and stated criteria for success are a range of data collection/interrogation and practitioner/school engagement arrangements and these too are in the process of revision and improvement.
- 5.8 All contributing services' and agencies' NEETs reduction efforts are subject to both regular and summative forms of evaluation, the results of which are scrutinised by Youth Service, Education Directorate and Corporate performance management arrangements. Ultimately, young people themselves will accurately judge performance matters and their involvement is intrinsic to evaluation arrangements.
- 5.9 Reports regarding the impact of the NEETs strategy will be provided to Scrutiny annually.

Conclusion

- 5.10 The LA and its partners are intent on securing better outcomes for our young people. In order to achieve these, we must collectively challenge our approaches and explore more effective ways to engage all those in the business of education to improve existing practices where necessary and relevant. Young people, rather than institutions and services, are the focus underpinning our NEETs priorities and the strategy assists us all to maintain this focus.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 No assumptions have been felt to be necessary in this report.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Cabinet is asked to consider this Integrated Impact Assessment (Appendix 3) alongside this Report in support of progressing to strategy adoption and implementation from July 2021.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the new approach to Inclusion and wellbeing. There is no suggestion that additional resources will be required to support the implementation of the Inclusion Compendium. Schools, provisions and the LA will need to work together to ensure the most effective use of school resources, additional support and where necessary align with Education Other than at School (EOTAS) capabilities to support all pupils.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no specific staffing implications linked to this approach.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 The report reflects the views of the consultees based on consultations undertaken to date.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Education Act 1996
Equality Act 2010
United Nations Convention on The Rights Of The Child
Welsh Government Engagement and Progression Framework guidance

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Appendices

Appendix 1: NEETs Strategy

Appendix 2: 5 year NEETs performance comparison figures

Appendix 3: Integrated Impact Assessment