

## Lancashire County Council's Priority to Increase the Number of Young People in Education, Employment, or Training

### Current Position

In Lancashire, there are currently over 28,600 young people within the 16 and 17 year old cohort, which is the fifth largest across all local authorities in England. As mentioned in the main report, our statutory duties require us to track the participation status of this cohort on an ongoing basis as well as engaging with those who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET).

A number of activities take place so that we can accurately maintain our participation data and understand how many young people are in education, employment and training (EET). These include recording the intended destinations of Year 11 pupils by working with schools; ongoing data exchange with other local authorities; receipt of enrolment data from colleges and other post-16 providers; receipt of monthly joiners and leavers lists from post-16 providers; and continual tracking of participation, with a focus on those who are either NEET or whose participation status is not known and who are in a vulnerable group. As can be seen from the information below, through the appointment of the Youth Future's Team, we are now in a position to directly engage with young people who are NEET so we can encourage, enable and assist them to participate in EET.

The key measure used by the Department for Education (DfE) to determine how effectively local authorities have been discharging their statutory duty is a three-month average of December to February performance. This information is in the public domain and is focused on NEET and those whose participation status is not known. The table below sets out our performance over the last three years:

**Table 1: DfE Comparative Data Scorecard Performance**

		NEET		Not Known		Combined	
		%	Number	%	Number	%	Number
Dec 2022 – Feb 2023 3mth average	Lancashire	2.6	733	2.7	775	5.3	1,507
	North West	3.5		1.8		5.3	
	National	2.8		2.4		5.2	
Dec 2021 – Feb 2022 3mth average	Lancashire	2.5	689	2.7	754	5.2	1,443
	North West	3.1		1.8		4.9	
	National	2.6		2.2		4.7	
Dec 2020 – Feb 2021 3mth average	Lancashire	2.5	680	3.2	856	5.8	1,536
	North West	3.4		1.9		5.3	
	National	2.8		2.7		5.5	

As can be seen from the table above, we have broadly maintained our position compared to last year and our combined position is in line with the regional and national positions. There were 720 more young people in our December 2022 to February 2023 overall cohort compared to the previous year so to have only 64 more who were NEET or not known shows that the significant majority were in a positive destination. Whilst the table shows that our NEET performance is better than the regional and national comparators,

we acknowledge that more work needs to be done to address our not known position. This is captured as a specific priority within our Increasing EET action plan.

At the time of writing, our most recent performance for all 16 and 17 year olds is from the August 2023 data return to the DfE. The information for all 16 and 17 year olds as well as those in a vulnerable group, is shown in the tables below:

**Table 2: Overall Combined NEET and Not Known Position – All 16 and 17 Year Olds**

		NEET		Not Known		Combined		Cohort
		%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	
August 2023	Lancashire	3.4	981	1.7	499	5.2	1,480	28,636
	North West	4.4		1.8		6.1		
	National	3.4		3.7		7.0		
August 2022	Lancashire	3.0	836	2.8	778	5.8	1,614	27,799
	North West	3.7		2.3		6.0		
	National	3.0		7.0		10.0		
August 2021	Lancashire	2.9	770	2.3	621	5.2	1,391	26,635
	North West	3.8		2.2		6.0		
	National	3.1		5.6		8.7		

As can be seen from the table above, our current performance compares well against the regional and national comparators. The improvement in our not known position is very positive to note.

Further to this, the current combined NEET and not known position across the 12 districts in Lancashire can be seen in the table below:

**Table 3: Combined NEET and Not Known Position by district, August 2023**

	NEET		Not Known		Combined	
	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number
Burnley	4.2	101	2.3	56	6.5	157
Chorley	3.5	94	1.5	39	5.0	133
Fylde	2.8	43	2.1	33	4.9	76
Hyndburn	4.8	106	1.8	40	6.6	146
Lancaster	4.5	131	1.8	51	6.3	182
Pendle	3.2	85	1.3	33	4.5	118
Preston	3.4	129	2.4	90	5.8	219
Ribble Valley	1.8	24	0.8	11	2.6	35
Rossendale	3.3	58	1.1	20	4.5	78
South Ribble	3.1	79	2.0	50	5.1	129
West Lancashire	2.9	75	1.1	30	4.0	105
Wyre	2.4	56	2.0	46	4.4	102

**Table 4: Overall Combined NEET and Not Known Position – Lancashire County Council Children Looked After Young People Aged 16 and 17 Resident in Lancashire**

	NEET		Not Known		Combined	
	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number
August 2023	18.3	62	0.0	0	18.3	62
August 2022	13.4	45	2.7	9	16.1	54
August 2021	19.4	61	1.9	6	21.3	67

The table above shows the 16 and 17 year old Children Looked After (CLA) young people who are resident within Lancashire and for whom LCC is their corporate parent.

Regional and national comparisons are not available for the above table due to differences in the methodology used and the age range of young people being counted. We report our figures based on our internal counting methodology for CLA young people, which is a combination of looked after young people and care leavers aged 16 and 17.

**Table 5: Overall Combined NEET and Not Known Position – 16 and 17 Year Olds with an EHCP**

	NEET		Not Known		Combined	
	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number
August 2023	9.6	109	0.4	4	10.0	113
August 2022	8.0	77	1.5	15	9.5	92
August 2021	7.4	70	2.4	23	9.8	93

The table above shows the NEET and not known position for 16 and 17 year olds with an EHCP who are Lancashire residents. It should be noted that, from August 2021 to August 2023, the overall cohort of young people with an EHCP has increased by 187.

The regional and national positions are only available on a quarterly basis and the table below sets out the position as of June 2023:

**Table 6: June 2023 regional and national overall combined NEET and Not Known Position – 16 and 17 Year Olds with an EHCP**

	NEET		Not Known		Combined	
	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number
North West	11.4	970	1.0	85	12.3	1,055
National	8.7	5,065	1.6	932	10.3	5,997

### Overall participation

As of August 2023, the overall percentage of 16 and 17 year olds in EET was 94.8%, which equates to 27,150 young people. This compares to August 2022 when 94.2% were in EET, which equated to 26,183 young people.

The latest official participation figures from the DfE are from March 2023. These figures show that our participation has marginally decreased from 93.0% in March 2022 to 92.7% in March 2023. Despite this slight reduction, our participation remains above that of the regional and the national averages, which are 91.4% and 92.3% respectively. It should also be noted that the regional position reduced by 0.9% and the national position reduced by 0.7%, compared to March 2022. The Lancashire position compares favourably to these.

## **Supporting young people into EET**

As outlined in the April 2023 report, a range of activity takes place to support young people who are unsure of their next steps or who are NEET, as well as supporting young people in their transition from school to a positive post-16 destination.

Through the Education Strategy, there will be an enhanced focus on the Increasing EET priority over the next academic year and an action plan (Appendix 'B') has been created to take this forward. The plan is based around the following priorities:

- Raising aspirations across primary and secondary school pupils, including their parents, carers and families
- Develop a risk of NEET indicator (RONI) with secondary schools across the county to better understand young people who may become NEET and to identify them as soon as possible to ensure appropriate support is in place
- Develop systems and processes to support the sustained transition of young people from Key Stage 4 into an appropriate post 16 EET destination
- Develop systems and processes to support NEET young people to reengage in a positive EET destination, including those in Year 11 with no intended destination and those at risk of dropping out of Key Stage 5
- Work with providers of post 16 education and training to ensure the availability of accessible flexible provision for 16-18 year olds across the county
- Enhance our participation tracking function to reduce the number of not knowns
- Develop a communication and training plan

As shown in Appendix 'B', the action plan will take a multi-agency approach and we have worked closely with the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub (Skills Hub) and the Careers Hub to develop the plan. Due to the partnership nature of the actions, we have highlighted where there are links to other plans and pieces of work, such as the Early Years and Education Strand of Lancashire 2050 and the CLA/CL EET Plan.

The second key update from the Education Improvement Service is that three staff have been recruited to the 16-19 Education and Skills Team. The new appointments are called the Youth Futures Team and their priority is to engage with young people who are NEET to provide them with high quality and impartial advice and guidance, with the aim of supporting them to reengage in a positive EET destination, raising their aspirations and securing positive outcomes for their futures. The team will ensure that we are meeting our statutory duties to encourage, enable and assist young people to participate and to promote the effective participation of 16 and 17 year olds in Lancashire. They will focus on providing a universal offer of support for young people who are not already engaged with other LCC teams/services, such as the Virtual School. They will have an increased

focus on three priority districts – Preston, Burnley and Lancaster – as these districts have the highest number of NEET and not known young people across Lancashire.

As well as directly engaging with NEET young people, the team will also look to engage with schools, colleges and community partners to look at how we can best work together to increase the number of 16 and 17 year olds in EET. This will form a key part of the Increasing EET action plan.

Throughout the summer, the Youth Futures Team have engaged with Year 11 school leavers who had no intended post 16 EET destination and have successfully supported some young people into a positive destination. For the previous two years, we have accessed additional funding through the Skills Hub from the Careers and Enterprise Company's transition fund to commission this support from Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's New Directions Careers Guidance Service so it is a step forward that we are now able to provide this support directly to our residents.

From the interactions with young people and their families, the reasons young people are NEET include the following: just want a job but don't know how to get one; didn't like college and didn't get the support they needed; mental health issues and social anxiety; and they didn't know what their options were.

We are already seeing some positive feedback and outcomes from the work of the new team, such as:

- "This is the first time since my son left school at 14 that we have any support, I can't thank you enough" – the young person is now doing a landscaping apprenticeship at Myerscough College
- "I have home educated my daughter and didn't think she would go to college. Thank you for helping her apply to college" – the young person is going to Preston College to study hair and beauty
- "Thank you so much for pointing us in the right direction"
- Supported a young person with their CV and interview techniques and they have secured a full time job

In response to feedback from colleges and to facilitate partnership working in relation to increasing EET, we have reviewed our data sharing protocols regarding young people who are NEET or whose participation status is not known. As there are various legal gateways which support this partnership working and data exchange, we are able to share this data with post 16 education and training providers and relevant partners, so they are able to directly engage with these young people. This approach has been supported by the Council's Information Governance Team.

In terms of engaging with employers, the action plan includes developing a mentorship scheme for young people with employers and role models and also working with the Skills Hub and the Careers Hub around developing the employability skills of young people and this will require the engagement of employers in order to progress this.

As raised in previous meetings, the risk to increasing participation remains in relation to the significant reduction in flexible project-based provision for young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET. This is because projects funded by European

Social Funds (ESF) have ended. ESF Funding has been replaced by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKPSF) but not all districts have chosen to support activity for NEETs. This may result in an increase in the number of young people who are NEET and we will monitor the impact over time.

### **Targeted support for young people in care and leaving care**

The Virtual School Core Team track the progress and attainment of all our looked after children, from early years to the end of Year 11. From the end of Year 11, there is the equivalent of 1.6 team members who lead on tracking and supporting looked after children in Year 12 and 13 and beyond, when they remain in education or training. They work closely with the colleges, universities and training providers to develop the curriculum and support offer. They support the development of opportunities for young people to raise their aspirations through events and programmes, such as the Empower Academy. They also work closely with social workers, Personal Advisers (PAs) and other partners to raise the aspirations of the young people and key adults around them.

Our Participation leads work with Leaving Care, Lynx, the Care Leavers Forum and Future U to hear young people's voice and also provide opportunities to learn more about career paths, such as the digital pathways.

As explained in the April report, the Employment and Support Team within the Virtual School provides support to Lancashire's young people in care (CLA) and leaving care aged 12-25 years old and who are living in the county. As well as supporting colleagues such as PAs and social workers with EET information and advice, the team works directly with the young person in response to their needs, wishes and aspirations. This begins with an options session in Year 9, followed by careers advice each term to inform an action plan to the end of Year 11. Intended destinations are collated and ongoing support is provided as required on EET options until the age of 25. This is part of the wider Corporate Parenting Board EET strategy and action plan and aspirations to improve EET outcomes for CLA's and care leavers.

Each secondary school in Lancashire has an assigned Employment Officer to work with Lancashire CLA's. They will offer an options session in Year 8 or 9 to clarify their goals and ensure that this aligns with GCSE's to be taken. They then work with the young person each term in Years 10 and 11 to offer additional careers, education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) sessions. Topics such as careers ideas, local labour market information, post 16 options and visiting colleges, universities or training providers can all be explored.

On leaving school, the team continues to support young people into EET until they are 25 years old and engage with internal and external partners to help with this. Young people are supported into suitable opportunities that align to their aspirations and with funding provided by LCC to remove any barriers, such as short course fees, clothing or equipment need. This is intended to ensure young people are engaged in a positive destination so that they do not become NEET.

The team are also working with the Deputy Police Crime Commissioner around the Care Covenant and an Employer Charter on a pan-Lancashire basis. Work is underway with a launch planned in early 2024 to create more opportunities for our CLA and Care

Leavers in the world of work, offering tasters, work experience, apprenticeships and employment. The Skills Hub has been supporting this work and is considering integration into the Lancashire Skills Pledge.

Tables 7 to 9 show the successful outcomes/progression routes achieved by the cohort of Lancashire's young people in care or leaving care who are engaged with the Employment and Support Team, by year:

**Table 7: New starts in 2022/23**

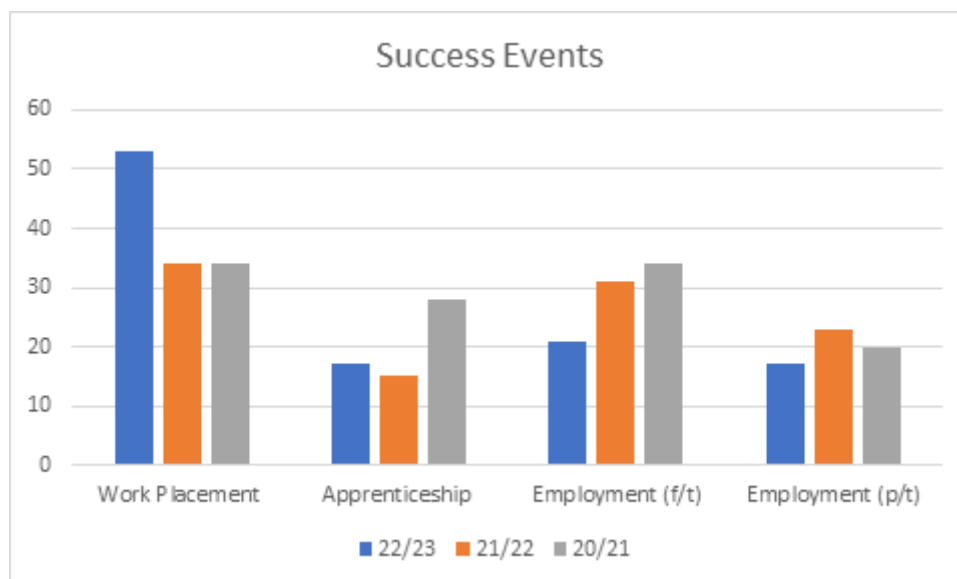
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Private Sector</b>	<b>LCC/Public Sector</b>	<b>Total</b>
Work Placement	47	6	53
Apprenticeship	15	2	17
Employment (f/t)	16	5	21
Employment (p/t)	14	3	17
<b>Total into employment opportunities</b>			<b>55</b>
College/Training Provider or University course			53
Employability Support Course			23
Exam success			5

**Table 8: 2021/22**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Private Sector</b>	<b>LCC/Public Sector</b>	<b>Total</b>
Work Placement	26	8	34
Apprenticeship	13	2	15
Employment (f/t)	25	6	31
Employment (p/t)	20	3	23
<b>Total into employment opportunities</b>			<b>69</b>
College/Training Provider or University course			57
Employability Support Course			44

**Table 9: 2020/2021**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Private Sector</b>	<b>Lancashire County Council</b>	<b>Total</b>
Work Placement	26	8	34
Apprenticeship	19	9	28
Employment (f/t)	30	4	34
Employment (p/t)	18	2	20
<b>Total into employment opportunities</b>			<b>82</b>
College/Training Provider or University course			69
Employability Support Course			57



As provided in the April report, the following information shows the breakdown of the number of CLA young people aged between 16 and 22, who are engaged in an apprenticeship, ranging from level 2 to level 4, as at 30 November 2022:

- 12 apprentices in Years 12 and 13
- 40 apprentices in Year 14+

Of these young people, 15 are receiving salary contributions from the Employment and Support Team. The other 37 young people are being funded directly from their employer.

Since 2019, 30 CLA young people or care leavers have completed their apprenticeships. Three of these young people have then progressed to university.

In addition to the information provided in April, some further points to note about the work of the Employment and Support Team are as follows:

- The employment figures demonstrate the continuing issues following Covid and the impact on many of our young people. Our referrals have remained static as we encourage PAs to self-refer their young people into employability support courses rather than referring them to the Employment Support Team before they are ready to take the next step with an employer.
- The impact of Covid is still evident with many of our young people lacking the confidence to enter employment. Apprenticeship opportunities have also declined with many businesses reducing staff. Opportunities to access apprenticeships or work placements within LCC have also reduced. There has been a national decline in young people accessing apprenticeships as they are now being used increasingly to upskill existing staff, rather than bring new staff into roles.
- The increased trend of agile working in LCC has impacted on the opportunities for apprenticeships within the authority and work placements for our young people, especially in administration and business support roles. Our young people usually require a high level of support initially and need to be working in the office environment with colleagues.



## **Supporting young people with high needs**

Further to the April report, work continues in relation to developing the local authority's supported internship offer. A new SEND Employment Officer post has been established within the Inclusion Service and this post will take forward the supported internship action plan which has been created. A SEND Employment Forum has been established as part of the action plan and will include a range of members, such as parent carer representatives, young people, LCC services, schools, colleges, employment services and the Careers Hub.

The work of the Lancashire PfA Strategy Delivery Group continues. The membership has been enhanced as the SEND lead enterprise advisers from the Lancashire Careers Hub have now joined the group.

The Increasing EET action plan highlights the areas where there are links with the PfA Strategy.

## **Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub**

As per the input at the last meeting, the Skills Hub supports the work of the local authorities and the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership and is responsible for supporting the Lancashire Skills and Employment Board and driving the implementation of local pan-Lancashire skills strategy, the Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework. The Skills Hub is leading on the Employment and Skills theme of Lancashire 2050 and is currently working with the board to refresh the Framework in line with the ambitions of Lancashire 2050. Two consultation events were held regarding the refresh, which attracted over 150 employers, education, skills and employment providers and local authorities. A draft of the refreshed Framework is due to be presented for approval to the Lancashire Leaders group in autumn.

A strategic theme of the framework is 'Future Workforce' and is focused on working with education and business to establish a talent pipeline and a future workforce that meets the current and future demands of the local labour market.

The Lancashire Careers Hub sits under the 'Future Workforce' theme, which is led by the Skills Hub, working with the delivery partner Inspira. The Careers Hub supports all 155 secondary schools, special schools, alternative providers and colleges across wider Lancashire to develop their careers programmes, to meet the 8 Gatsby Benchmarks, which are the national standards for careers excellence. Each school and college are matched with a local business leader to provide support to develop their careers plans, make links with local employers, and ensure that they are embedding encounters and experiences with employers from a range of different sectors. There are over 150 business leaders, 'Enterprise Advisers' matched to schools and colleges across Lancashire, with many more providing activities and experiences of the workplace, with the Careers Hub embedded in the Lancashire Skills Pledge which recognises Lancashire employers that are committed to inspiring, recruiting and developing Lancashire's people. The aim is to inspire young people about the range of job opportunities available to them - young people say '*I need to see it, to be it*', challenge stereotypes, raise aspirations and enable them to make informed

decisions about their futures. This includes exposure to different pathways, such as technical via apprenticeships, T Levels, and vocational provision and academic.

Progress in Lancashire against the Gatsby Benchmarks is strong, with Lancashire being one of the largest and highest performing Careers Hubs in the country. The table below provides a breakdown of individual Benchmark performance and a comparison to national data. The data is provided by the Careers and Enterprise Company from the Compass assessments undertaken by schools and colleges.

**Table 10: Pan-Lancashire performance against Gatsby Benchmarks (August 2023)**

<b>Benchmark</b>	<b>Lancashire</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>National quartile position for Lancashire, Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool</b>
1 - A stable careers programme	84.5%	56.2%	1
2 - Learning from careers and labour market information	91%	81.5%	1
3 - Addressing the needs of each student	73.1%	54.2%	1
4 - Linking curriculum learning to learners	87.8%	76.4%	1
5 - Encounters with employers and employees	84.5%	80.1%	2
6 - Experiences of workplaces	70.7%	64%	2
7 - Encounters with further and higher education	73.1%	52.3%	1
8 - Personal guidance	82.9%	75.2%	2

In addition to the above data, the average number of Benchmarks achieved by settings across Lancashire has increased from 6.1 to 6.3 out of eight.

The focus for the coming year is supporting schools and colleges to achieve sustained progression against the Gatsby Benchmarks, whilst also focusing on:

- Continuing to raise the profile of technical education routes, such as apprenticeships, T Levels and other vocational routes, alongside more traditional academic routes to enable young people to make informed choices about their next steps. This includes being one of three areas nationally, alongside the North East and London, to undertake an 'Early Connect' pilot.
- The Early Connect pilot aims to develop the UCAS system so that young people in Year 13 (sixth form or college) can view and apply for apprenticeships at the same time as submitting applications to universities and colleges for higher education provision. The approach aims to ensure greater visibility of apprenticeships, to improve the application process, boost parity of esteem and also enable employers to better engage and recruit young people to Level 3,

higher and degree apprenticeships. A working group of stakeholders has been established locally to take forward the pilot.

- Continuing to work with schools and colleges to ensure that Local Labour Market Intelligence resources, developed in collaboration with young people and employers, including Start in Lancashire, Portal and the LMI Board Games by travel to work area are integrated into the curriculum.
- The Careers Hub Team worked in partnership with colleges across Lancashire to deliver nine successful sector events across the county last academic year, with plans in place to increase this provision during the 2023/24 academic year, working collaboratively with employers. The sector days involved experiences with employers in the morning, with sector-based activities at the college in the afternoon. An example of a sector day that took place at Lancaster and Morecambe College is provided here, with a focus on low carbon and sustainability: <https://youtu.be/58ND2Y8XZ4Y>
- A continued focus is raising the profile of digital and cyber roles, working in partnership with the National Cyber Force and digital businesses across the area. A range of activities are planned, including, for example, the TeenTech Festival, as well as engaging schools in programmes such as CyberFirst and InnovateHer. The Skills Hub are also working with Strategic Command and the colleges to pilot a new, innovative FE Bursary scheme to enable young people to build their skills to apply for digital roles in defence.
- The Careers Hub has secured some funding from the Careers and Enterprise Company to support a small number of secondary schools in Lancashire to deliver an enhanced information, advice and guidance framework. The schools must focus this enhanced support on Year 11 pupils who are eligible for free school meals with a view to helping them make a positive transition into post 16 education.

Lancashire Careers Hub continues to deliver a wide range of CPD events for Lancashire Careers Leaders in schools. The Inclusion Community of Practice Conference took place in May 2023 which had a focus on SEND and AP Workplace experiences and transition to employment and the Annual Careers Hub Conference which was attended by over 170 delegates in June 2023. The annual conference focused on impact and the work readiness of young people, working collaboratively with employers. Both events will be repeated in the coming academic year.

### **Next Steps and Actions**

The Increasing EET priority will be taken forward through the action plan at Appendix 'B'. It will also be addressed through the Team Around the School and Settings (TASS) locality meetings, where partners have identified this as a priority.

The 16-19 Education and Skills Team will continue to track the participation status of the 16 and 17 year old cohort within the county. This will be done in partnership with secondary schools, post-16 education and training providers, other services within Lancashire County Council, other local authorities, and partners such as the Lancashire Careers Hub. The Youth Futures Team will provide targeted advice and guidance to young people in the NEET group to help them to move into a positive destination, as well as developing collaborative approaches to reducing NEET with our key partners.