

14 October 2021

Post-16 Employment and Skills Support

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Councillor Chris Towe - Education and Skills

1.0 Aim

To update Members on the post-16 employment and skills support services in Walsall.

2.0 Recommendations

Members to note the current post-16 employment and skills support services in Walsall and consider the future resourcing of the services.

3.0 Report detail

Under Raising the Participation Age (RPA) legislation, all young people in England are required to continue in education or training until at least their 18th birthday. Local authorities have a statutory duty to 'assist, encourage and enable' young people aged 13-19 (and young adults with a learning difficulty and/or disability up to the age of 25) to participate in education or training. Local authorities are also required to ensure sufficient education is available to meet the needs of this population in their area.

Local Authority retain responsibility for providing targeted support for vulnerable young people and to provide returns on participation including data on those Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) to Department for Education on a monthly basis.

3.1. Post 16 IAG Service

The Post 16 IAG Team and Education Business Partnership, made up of 10 staff, were transferred from Childrens Services to the Employment and Skills Team in October 2020. This enabled the two teams to create a joint up and coherent education, employment and skills service to our young and older residents, and to ensure a targeted approach and focus on young people aged 16-24 years was maintained and further developed.

3.2. Employment and Skills Service

The key strategic objective of the Employment & Skills Team is to improve economic growth in the borough through collaborative working with our employers, partner organisations and training providers. Our core aim is to ensure that every Walsall resident has the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential. The team achieves this by providing people access to support that progresses people to local skills provision, good quality jobs and sustainable careers. Our focus is to understand that the barriers faced by our residents are addressed including signposting to key specialist services ie counselling, health, housing, debt. Our support is generally targeted at people who are not in employment education or training.

Information Advice and Guidance (IAG)

Schools are responsible for delivering Careers Education, Information Advice and Guidance against the 8 Gatsby Benchmarks identified as the core priorities within a good careers and enterprise programme in schools. They are:

- A stable careers programme
- Learning from career and labour market information
- Addressing the needs of each pupil
- Linking curriculum learning to careers
- Encounters with employers
- Experiences of workplaces
- Encounters with further and higher education
- Personal guidance

The Client Caseload Information System (CCIS) Managed Service is provided by Prospects Services (Shaw Trust) who are contracted on behalf of Walsall Council, the service provides local authorities with the information they need to support young people to engage in education and training; to identify those who are not participating and to plan services that meet young peoples' needs. It also enables LAs to provide management information to DfE through NCCIS.

Prospects CCIS team collect engagement data from schools, colleges and some training providers and complete the data returns to DfE on behalf of the Council but does not provide the local follow up services that focus on those young people who are not engaging in other services so become 'NEET' or 'Not Known'. Prospects team rely on the Council's CIAG Team (now part of the Employment and Skills Team) to support them with these young people and also mediate with schools when required.

Prospects Service have been noted in a national review of local destinations data for the methods of tracking and combined working with schools, through its 'Schools Exchange' as an example of best practice. This system was developed initially in Walsall over 5 years ago and has now spread into multiple local authorities and has been constantly improved. It is the power of the Prospects Service data hosting service that allows schools live access to data 24/7 from the moment a young person enters year 11 up until the January after finishing compulsory education. This facility is not available elsewhere.

With new planned advancements in hosting, Prospects Service provide free services to schools in Walsall including from the 2020 providing school leavers with access to destination information and the ability to update this data until each person reaches the beginning of the academic year 14. This will provide a multi organisational approach to future long-term tracking and identification of NEETs.

One extra tool we now have at our disposal is access to private email addresses. Through the Schools Exchange we have seen a substantial increase in the number of email addresses we can now use to help target follow-up. In 2019, only 37 email addresses of year 11 leavers were stored on our system. In 2020 this rose to 719 and for 2021 school leavers, 1873 private emails addresses were ready to be sent destination surveys on September 1st. This allows Prospects to email a survey on mass, allowing the very early collection of destinations without the delay of processing information by colleges or schools. This will help us target those who do not have a place much earlier than would normally be possible.

Below is a table showing how Walsall are currently performing in terms of the collection of Offer of Learning data. Offers of Learning should be given to every young person of Year 11 and Year 12 academic age. It is expected that by the end of September all young people would have received an offer appropriate to their academic and personal abilities.

The table below shows that in total 86.4% of those who should have an offer, have already received one at the end of July. This puts us in a good position moving forward and provides an initial projection of how many young people may require additional support in September.

We are current in a better position than the West Midlands and England figures, and ranked 2nd in our statistical neighbours.

Jul-21	Year 11 Offers %	Year 12 Offers %	Combined Offers %
Walsall	86.7%	86.1%	86.4%
Derby	73.7%	44.6%	59.4%
Rochdale	76.0%	31.9%	54.3%
Peterborough	94.0%	80.4%	87.4%
Stoke-on-Trent	86.8%	8.5%	46.8%
Bolton	82.5%	54.1%	68.9%
Tameside	79.3%	31.1%	56.3%
Dudley	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Sandwell	76.9%	77.6%	77.3%
Kirklees	91.0%	75.6%	83.0%
Telford and Wrekin	93.9%	72.2%	83.6%

West Midlands	78.1%	57.5%	67.9%
England	76.7%	64.0%	70.3%

Traded Services

The Post 16 IAG Service and Education Business Partnership services, made up of 10 staff, were transferred from Childrens Services to the Employment and Skills Team in October 2020. The aim was to continue to retain and grow the traded services offer, however the challenges of delivering education during the pandemic prevented the opportunity to engage with schools effectively in order to offer our traded services. Many schools have made their own arrangements to provide impartial CIAG, however the Employment and Skills team continue to provide support with picking up students who have become NEET and provide support with CCIS enquiries. A traded service is provided to three Special Schools, Joseph Leckie Academy and Emmanuel School.

College Collaboration Project

From Sept 2020 – March 2021, the project allowed both the College and Local Authority to collaborate by pooling resources and staff to support the NEET young people identified at year 12 and offer intervention. This meant that individual young people could be guided and placed within the College or referred to the wider local authority offer using the BC Impact and Walsall Works programmes. Unfortunately the lockdowns during the pandemic resulted in plans being changed however we developed and strengthened our existing collaborative partnership with Walsall College together with our contracted data management service with Prospects. Data sharing agreements with both organisations have now been updated and amended to support the 16-18-years-old NEETs.

Careers Enterprise Company

Funding from the Careers Enterprise Company has been secured to build additional capacity in the existing Employment and Skills team to work with disadvantaged, vulnerable and hard to reach young people pre-16 and post 16 who are identified as being at risk of becoming NEET. A high percentage of the target group may not have attended school this past year

and therefore will have missed out on vital education and careers guidance. Young people identified at risk will be supported through targeted one-to-one contact and face to face interventions delivered by a qualified Careers Advice and Guidance practitioner.

The project will focus on those young people in year 11 and year 13 during the summer period to ensure a smooth transition back into post 16 provisions. The additional capacity has allowed work to begin and reach out to young people who are elective home educated (EHE), not registered with education in Walsall as children missing education (CME).

Black Country Impact

Walsall Council together with the other Black Country Local Authorities Dudley, Sandwell, and Wolverhampton, have been delivering this programme since July 2016 (funded by European Social Fund / Youth Employment Initiative (ESF/YEI). The project is targeted at getting 16-29-year-old NEETs engaging with positive activities such as education, employment and training. The programme, which provides non-statutory support and guidance is currently due to end in July 2023.

The programme provides personalised, joined up provision of local services to support young people who are unemployed, inactive and at risk of social inclusion to overcome barriers to participation and enter sustainable employment. Referrals are received from a multitude of sources i.e. education and training providers, Health Services, Families, Voluntary Community Services, Police, Probation and local authority teams such as Locality hubs, Youth Justice, Teenage Parents, Transitional Leaving Care.

Despite the difficult operating environment with the pandemic, the project continued to offer a hybrid delivery mode with most of our participant interactions delivered remotely. However, arrangements were in place to support the most vulnerable young people face to face in partner venues or home visits if required.

Impact Hub

The Impact Hub in the Crossings at St Pauls Walsall, is a drop-in facility and this has become a focal point for young people to seek support. Advisors are available daily Monday to Friday. Due to the effects of the pandemic we envisage NEETs and levels of unemployment to remain high in the borough. The Hub is a vital resource for the community to seek support.

Impact data tables:

Impact Programme	Enrolments	Interventions	Outcomes
16-29 year olds (total)	4436	2461	1328
16-25 year olds (total)	3755	2119	1170

Outcomes	Education	Employment	Apprenticeship	Traineeship
16-25 year olds (total)	414	540	55	92

Employer Engagement

An Employment Engagement Officer is based within the Employment and Skills Team, fully funded by the BC IMPACT programme, who provides a universal business support offer to our local employers, with a key focus on accessing employment and apprenticeship opportunities for the benefit of IMPACT eligible participant aged 16-29 years old. The key focus of this role is to service the recruitment needs of the employer and encouraging them to recruit from specific demographics of the local population.

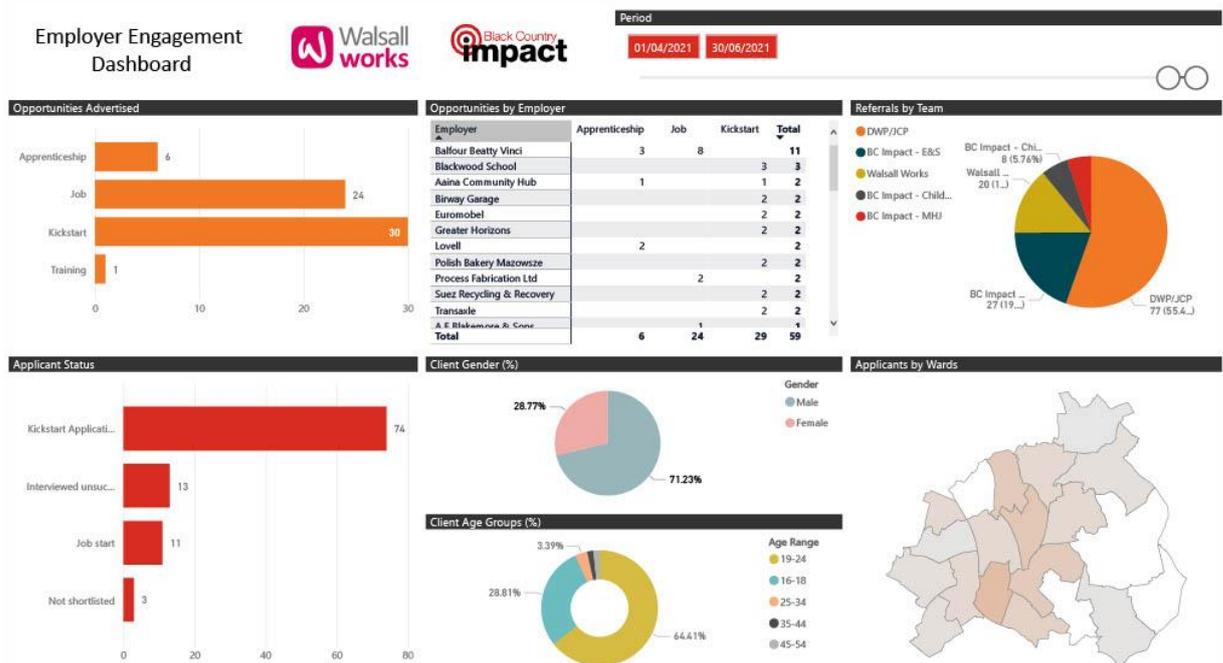
Over 1000 employers have been engaged and offered opportunities to young people with the majority of these being employers who have offered apprenticeships and paid work placements. The officer brings forward large-scale recruitments and current ones include:

RAC – are hoping to expand their Walsall operation through acquiring new commercial contracts, which could create 175 new jobs. RAC in discussions with the Council on suitable office premises in the town centre. The new job roles will be Contact Centre Advisers as well as a range of back office jobs in HR, data, contracting, engineers.

MIDLAND METRO – the expansion of the Metro line into Birmingham and Brierley will create a further 180 jobs for customer experience officers and tram drivers. The team are currently working closely with the Metro to developed pre-employment training courses to bring forward suitable candidates. They will also promote the vacancies directly to clients via our job matching service, job fair Expo, website, jobs bulletin and through our social media platforms.

HS2 – we are the approved job brokerage partner for HS2 and are servicing the needs of Balfour Beatty Vinci (BBV), the main contractor for the Lichfield to Leamington link of HS2. As the approved job broker for HS2 we can send CV's direct to organisations rather than make on-line applications which gives our participants an advantage in applying for jobs. Whilst a lot of the vacancies in rural locations on the HS2 line, we are now commencing recruitment for the HS2 Curzon Street Station in Birmingham meaning applicants will be able to use public transport to get there.

A performance dashboard highlights the number of opportunities bought in and the number of applicants and the referral route of applicants.



Walsall Works

Young people who are ineligible for support through Impact, can seek support from a small team of Walsall Works Employment Advisors. Employment Advisors have been using all virtual communication channels to support clients with their employability e.g. confidence building, CV preparation, job searches and assistance in finding online courses. The team have also referred clients to specialist services to tackle barriers: childcare, housing, debt, mental health and counselling.

The programme also offers clients with self-serve virtual tools such as:

Virtual Services

The Walsall Works website continues to undergo improvements and new updates, with the creation of apprenticeship resources, allowing residents to quickly access useful information. This includes where to find apprenticeships, pay and benefits, links to local providers and national schemes. Residents can also find resources on how to apply, CV writing, cover letters and interview techniques. Residents requiring more tailored support can register to the Walsall Works programme face to face. New apprenticeship resources can be found at <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/walsallcom/Walsall-Works/Apprenticeships>

Weekly Bulletins, showcase events, services, jobs, training and opportunities to residents, partners and local organisations. Over the last few months, the bulletin has supplemented with an additional fortnightly apprenticeship bulletin and monthly Kickstart vacancy bulletin.

Virtual Roadshows have hosted via Microsoft Teams and posted to our YouTube channel. These roadshows enable local people to hear first-hand from local employers on job roles in demand or from training providers on how to enrol for online courses in topics such as functional skills as well as vocational learning in key sectors areas. The last virtual event hosted an Apprenticeship Roadshow showcasing the latest opportunities across the region, with guest presentations from whg, Walsall College, In-Comm Training, National Careers Service and Walsall Council Endless Possibilities.

Careers Events via a Walsall Works Expo return to the borough on 22nd September, with 40+ employers and training providers interfacing with young people who are NEET or unemployed.

Kickstart

This national Kickstart scheme pledged to create 250,000 high quality paid 6-month work placements for young people aged 16 to 24 who are claiming a Universal Credit benefit and are at risk of long term unemployment. Walsall Council's Employment & Skills team are an authorised Gateway organisation for the new DWP Kickstart scheme and aim to bring forward 150 pledged placements from over 70 local employers, with 62 live placements with:

Aaina Community Hub	Kontroltek Ltd
AC Optics Ltd	Local Education and Development (LEAD)
Almozene Nursery and Children Center	Logistics World Limited
Atlas Teachers Ltd	Midland Langar Seva Society (MLSS)
Barhale Construction Services (BCS)	Midland Tarmacadam Surfacing Ltd
Blackwood School	One Walsall
Calderfields Hotel, Golf & Country Club	Palfrey Health Center
Choice Finance Mortgages	Polish Bakery Mazowsze
Dhillons Accountants	Ryder Saddlery Ltd
Dunton Environmental	The Best of Walsall
Euromobel	Transaxle Ltd
HappyMaven Ltd	Urban Hax CIC
Holloway Plastics	Walsall Black Sisters Collective (BSC)
J&E Sedgwick & Company Ltd	Walsall Council - Sport & Leisure Services
Keyboard Specialists Limited (KBS)	247 Cars

Breakdown of placements, referrals and client demographics can be seen in the dashboard:

Tameside	3.4%	1.7%	5.2%	92.7%
Dudley	3.4%	2.2%	5.6%	91.5%
Sandwell	2.2%	1.1%	3.2%	95.4%
Kirklees	3.3%	1.0%	4.3%	92.4%
Telford Wrekin	5.0%	1.6%	6.6%	90.4%
West Midlands	2.9%	2.4%	5.3%	92.9%
England	3.0%	2.3%	5.3%	92.5%

3.3. Post-16 Provision and Attainment

We have 20 Secondary schools, 17 Academies and 3 maintained. One of the maintained schools and one academy does not have Post 16 provision. Our post 16 provision and attainment remains consistently the same with the majority of our Post-16 cohort continue in education and move onto sixth forms (50.6%), and of those 82.6% remain at the school where they completed their compulsory education.

A total of 40.5% of school leavers more into a Further Education setting (40.5%) with the majority attending Walsall College and the remainder with private training providers.

97.9% of school leavers in 2020 went on to an activity that met the duty to participate.

Financial information

Income from IAG traded services has remained consistent but not increased from 5 schools and there is little appetite from schools to access this service from the Council and in most cases this is being delivered in house or contracted to private IAG practitioners. Some Walsall schools are currently using the Sandwell Connexions service to deliver IAG services.

During 2021, there was some income secured for pilot projects for the College Collaboration Project and a pilot is currently underway funded by the Careers Enterprise Company for pre-NEETs prevention work. Aside from these small pots of funding, the main support is delivered by the BC Impact programme and BC Impact Advisors significantly help in mitigating risks of young people aged 16+ becoming long term NEET, and these posts are funded by European Social Fund and Youth Employment Initiative until 31 July 2023. Therefore, there is a need to plan and review staffing structures to support the continuation of the LA's statutory duties to support vulnerable young people with SEND, those in care and young offenders. A reduction in resources for this provision could have an impact on the levels of 'not known' and NEET young people, and potentially on the levels of youth unemployment.

A Community Renewal Fund application valued at £230,000 for a Walsall NEETs Transition Programme was submitted and shortlisted by the West Midlands Combined Authority and we are currently waiting an outcome from Government on whether the funding is approved. If approved, this programme will deliver specialist transition support to young people over 15 years old with a focus on those 16-19 year olds, to prevent young people becoming NEET in an attempt to reduce youth unemployment. This bespoke programme identifies, tracks and locates young people after leaving or dropping out of mandatory academic provision and provides an engagement process that is tailored to support individuals back into existing mainstream provision and support services. The programme will also offer youth entrepreneurship skills for disaffected youths who are highly likely to fall out of the education system but whom may be interested and capable of setting up their own employment.

There is an ongoing commitment to fund the tracking services for CCIS data resourced at circa £50,000 per annum, however the contract with Prospects ceases on 31 March 2022 so there is a need to procure the services. Withdrawal of this level of tracking and monitoring could be a risk of not meeting our minimum statutory requirements and reporting on destination outcomes. This service also progresses these vulnerable groups to seek support through the funded Impact and Walsall Works programmes.

Reducing Inequalities

It is essential to support young people to remain in education and training as health inequalities are affected by poor education. Our IAG services delivered by the Employment and Skills Team support vulnerable young people aged 16-29, and advisors delivering support are physical or virtually co-located in teenage pregnancy, youth justice, transition and leaving care teams. The team are also based in community venues in order to support clients from varying socio demographic groups ie gender, ethnicity, location.

4. Decide

Members to consider how the services outlined could be resourced and sustained. Members to identify when and how often they wish to receive reports.

5. Respond

The impact of funding reductions will be reported back to the Committee and will inform future planning for the staff structures.

6. Review

Report further progress on post 16 delivery to the Education Committee in 2022.

Background papers

None

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