

REPORT TO: Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 20th January 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director of Children's Services

PORTFOLIO: Children & Young People

SUBJECT: Number of young people who are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) and whose activity is Not Known to the local authority

WARDS: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To report the Annual NEET and Not Known figures for Halton and provide information about the reasons for growth of the number of young people who are NEET.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That

- 1) the report be noted;**
- 2) information about the current situation in January 2025 be tabled at the meeting.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Education and Skills Act 2008 placed two Raising Participation Age related duties on local authorities regarding academic age 16- & 17-year-olds:

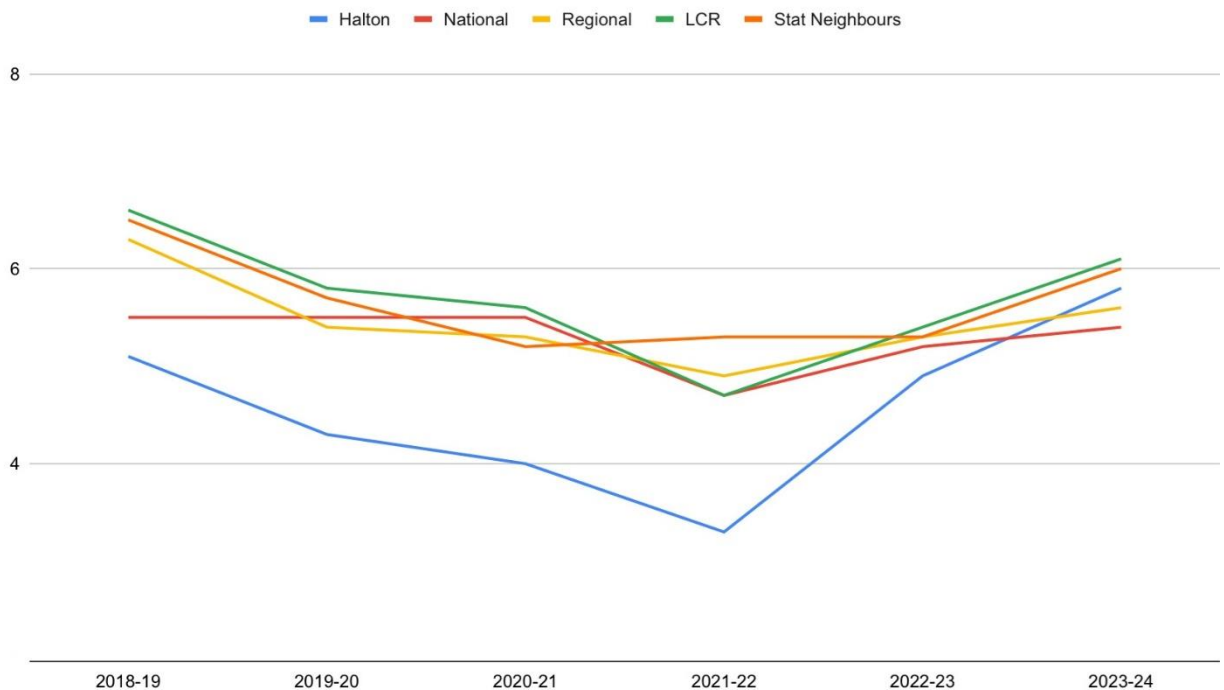
- Local authorities must promote the effective participation in education and training of 16- & 17-year-olds in their area with a view to ensuring that those persons fulfil the duty to participate in education or training.
- Local authorities must make arrangements – that is, maintain a tracking system – to identify 16- & 17-year-olds who are not participating in education or training.

3.2 The 14-19 Team in Halton work to fulfil these two duties by tracking the participation of all academic age 16- & 17-year-olds who are resident in Halton. In addition, young people between 18 – 25 years old with a maintained Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP) are tracked. The 14-19 Team provide Careers Guidance and support to those who are not participating, and work with schools to support young people to transition from Year 11 into Post 16 education.

- 3.3 As part of the statutory duties the Department for Education (DfE) require every local authority to report monthly on the participation of academic age 16- & 17-year-olds, and those up to 25 with a maintained EHCP.
- 3.4 The DfE collate the data provided by local authorities and publish an annual measure of the percentage of young people who are NEET or whose activity is Not Known to the local authority. This percentage is an average of the figures across December, January and February annually. The figure is for academic age 16- & 17-year-olds who live in Halton. It does not include children in the care of Halton who live out of borough or those with a maintained EHCP older than academic age 17. It does include children in the care of other local authorities but live in Halton.
- 3.5 After years of NEET and Not Know figures decreasing in Halton, and being significantly lower than other areas, the number of young people who are NEET has risen. The increase is significantly greater in Halton than in other local authorities.

Annual 3-month average combined NEET and Not Known results:

Halton, National, Regional, LCR and Stat Neighbours



	Halton	National	Regional	LCR	Statistical Neighbours
2018/19	5.1%	5.5%	6.3%	6.6%	6.5%
2019/20	4.3%	5.5%	5.4%	5.8%	5.7%
2020/21	4%	5.5%	5.3%	5.6%	5.2%
2021/22 (SN changes applied)	3.3% (= 106 young people)	4.7%	4.9%	4.7%	5.3%
2022/23	4.9%	5.2%	5.3%	5.4%	5.3%
2023/24*	5.8% (= 190 young people)	5.4%	5.6%	6.1%	6%
Overall increase since 2021/22	2.5%	0.7%	0.7%	1.4%	0.7%

* 2023/24 figures are draft, verified, and published figures have not been released at time of writing this report, although any change will likely be no greater than 0.1% difference.

- 3.6 **Not Known Figures** - For those whose activity is Not Known to the local authority Halton has consistently performed well in this measure as we have a strong tracking process and good relationships with others to share information. In 2023/24 the Not Known figure for Halton is 0.3% (10 young people) compared to 2.2% Nationally and 1.4% Regionally.
- 3.7 Halton's figure of 0.3% Not Known for 2023/24 is the same as it was in 2021/22. This situation is identical for National and Regional figures too i.e. their current Not Known performance is the same as it was in 2021/22. Therefore, the increase in the overall 3-month average combined NEET and Not Known percentage all comes from an increase in the number of young people who are NEET.
- 3.8 **NEET Figures** - Whilst NEET figures have and are continuing to rise, in March 2024 the DfE referenced Halton as maintaining relatively low NEET and Not Known figures when considered in the wider economic and social context. Young people living in Halton have a higher likelihood of being NEET according to data from the Youth Futures Foundation. Halton is ranked as the 9th highest local authority in England for NEET risk factors. Please see Appendix 1 for a list of highest ranked local authorities and where our statistical neighbours are ranked.
- 3.9 The economic and social context of Halton may indicate young people have a higher likelihood of being NEET, but our aspirations for our young people expressed through the Corporate Strategy (Priority 3) and Children and Young People's Plan (strategic pillar: raising our aspirations) means there is more that we should be doing to reduce the current number of young people who are NEET in Halton.
- 3.10 Two key reasons NEET figures have been rising are:

- 3.10.1 *Young People's emotional health and wellbeing affecting their ability to progress to and sustain their Post 16 education or training.*
- 3.10.2 The changes experienced in schools regarding attendance, behaviours leading to exclusions, those choosing to be electively home educated and lack of provision to meet needs of a small number of young people with Education, Health and Care Plans continues to impact young people into Post 16.
- 3.10.3 Working alongside schools support is given to young people in Year 11 who are identified as being at risk of not progressing to Post 16 Education or Training. The number of referrals accepted has to be limited due to capacity to support. Approximately 160 young people were supported in 2023/24 and 88% of those progressed to a positive Post 16 destination.
- 3.10.4 Young people in Year 11 who are Electively Home Educated are also offered Careers Advice and Guidance from Halton Borough Council, and supported to consider their Post 16 options. Of the 47 Year 11 young people who were Electively Home Educated in 2023/24 89.4% of those have progressed to a positive Post 16 destination.
- 3.10.5 Despite the work with Year 11 pupils annually in previous years less young people progressed to a positive destination Post 16; 94.5% in autumn 2023 compared to 95.2% in 2022 and 98.8% in 2021. At the time of writing this report comparative figures are not available for 2023/24.
- 3.10.6 In addition to lack of progression, in the 2023/24 academic year 359 young people joined the NEET cohort compared to 282 in 2021/22, with the biggest increase being young people leaving education or training part way through an academic year. Provision issues in Halton, referenced below, limits options for young people who do want to return to education or training.
- 3.10.7 *Lack of Post 16 provision in Halton, especially provision that allows learners to join part way through an academic year.*
- 3.10.8 In addition to Riverside College and OBA 6th form, who run their 16–18-year-olds courses for a full academic year, there are two work-based learning Post 16 providers in Halton. Both these providers rely on subcontracts from larger organisations as they are not Ofsted registered and do not have an Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Contract. Both providers have the ability to offer a small scale environment, better suited to the needs of some young people.
- 3.10.9 Since 2022/23 academic year both work-based learning providers have had a reduction to their contracts, reducing the number of learners they are able to work with, and their flexibility to offer the opportunity to join part way through an academic year. This has impacted the choice for young people who become NEET part way through an academic year and want to progress to learning within the borough of Halton. The changes are

reflective of changes the Department for Education made to funding methodologies and restrictions on subcontracting provision.

- 3.10.10 The vulnerability of the Post 16 provider landscape in Halton has been raised with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and with the Department for Education (DfE). Work has been ongoing to engage with other Post 16 Providers to encourage new provision into Halton.
- 3.10.11 From September 2024 a new Post 16 provider started delivery in Halton. Based at Murdishaw Community Centre the provision is within a nurturing environment with good community links through the Centre. The provision will accept learners part way through an academic year. Referrals to provision have been high and the provider is in the process of considering a growth plan for Halton to determine whether it can accommodate the ongoing requests for provision.
- 3.10.12 Work continues in engaging other Post 16 Providers to attract further provision into Halton.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no policy implications of pursuing the recommended course of action.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications of pursuing the recommended course of action.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 6.1 *Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence*
Supporting young people to make a positive and sustained transition into Post 16 education or training allows them to continue their journey to gain the skills and abilities needed for long term employment. Employment is a route to independence and choices as an adult.
- 6.2 *Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy*
Supporting young people to make a positive and sustained transition into Post 16 education or training allows them to continue their journey to gain the skills and abilities needed for long term employment. This creates the next generation of local workforce to meet the skills needs of our local economy.
- 6.3 *Supporting Children, Young People and Families*
Supporting young people to make a positive and sustained transition into Post 16 education or training is integral to ensuring they reach their full potential.

6.4 *Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most in Need*
Social and economic factors show Halton young people to be at higher risk of NEET. These risk factors can be mitigated against with the right level of support to transition into and sustain Post 16 education or training.

6.5 *Working Towards a Greener Future*
None

6.6 *Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community*
None

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Opportunities associated with the proposed actions are:

7.1.1 Raise awareness of the provision landscape in Halton and encourage any engagement or support for Post 16 provision to build a sustainable delivery model in Halton.

7.1.2 Raise awareness of the difficulties Post 16 providers operate within due to funding methodologies.

7.2 The risks associated with not taking the proposed actions are:

7.2.1 Lack of understanding of the experience of Post 16 providers, and young people in the borough.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 Supporting young people who are NEET gives those most at risk of not being financially independent the opportunity to re-engage in education or training and progress towards sustained, long term employment.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There is no effect on the environment.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Participation of young people in education, employment or training – statutory guidance for local authorities April 2024	Participation of young people: education, employment and training - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)	Hâf Bell