

Warrington

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

Children and Young People

Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) Chapter

2015

June 2015

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The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) considers a wide range of factors that affect the health and wellbeing of the people of Warrington. The objective of the JSNA is to involve partner organisations, such as the local NHS, local authorities, Police, Fire and third sector organisations in order to provide a top level, holistic view of current and future need within the borough. The JSNA is used to agree key priorities to improve the health and wellbeing of all our communities at the same time as reducing health inequalities

Introduction

There are 3.5% 16 -19 year old young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) in Warrington, which is relatively low compared to the 5.2% regional and 4.7% England averages¹. However, the majority of young people who are NEET in Warrington are those that are the most vulnerable with the biggest barriers to overcome, and therefore require the most support in order to positively participate². In addition, as the Government has maintained its commitment to raise the participation age to 17 years in September 2013 and 18 years by 2015³, the council has the statutory duty to encourage, enable and assist all young people to participate in education or training⁴.

In a time of economic uncertainty and concerns over employment opportunities, it is clear that achieving a continued reduction in NEET and ensuring the growth in participation up to the age of 18 years is likely to be challenging and therefore remains a priority.

Due to the focus on vulnerable groups, this chapter links to the following: Youth Offending, Teenage Pregnancy, Children in Care, and Young people with learning difficulties or disabilities (in particular Transition Issues).

Key issues and gaps

Warrington Borough Councils: Careers for Young People Service, is responsible for tracking and confirming the current destination and status of all Warrington residents between the ages of 16 and 19 years. The service also provides advice and guidance support to those not in education employment or training (NEET), those at risk of NEET, and those not complying to raising participation age⁵, all of which are aligned to compliment the schools and colleges who since September 2012, hold the statutory responsibility to provide advice and guidance to their students⁶.

The Careers for Young People Service provides support to the most vulnerable young people at risk of NEET in order to ensure they are able to overcome any barriers into progressing into learning or work. The Careers for Young People Service has advisers who are available to help all young people, and offers facilities such as computer and internet access, job vacancies, CV and application completion support, including apprenticeships. Advisers also offer support within community settings, ensuring young people have a local service, while also promoting the benefits of using local facilities available to them, such as public computers in the libraries, and community centres. The service works closely with stakeholders such as schools, colleges, volunteer organisations and other third sector support services, other children's services, employers, and any organisation who is offering support to young people who are not engaging in learning or work.

We have aligned the service to meet the needs identified in Warrington, implementing targeted and focused caseload management work, with lead caseworkers and specialist support leads, in order to support the most vulnerable into positive progression,

¹ Based on November 2014, December 2014 and January 2015 averages

² With reference to the 'level of population need' on page 4

³ The Education and Skills Act 2008

⁴ Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009

⁵ Education and Skills Act 2008

⁶ Section 29 of the Education Act 2011

especially those that live in deprivation areas. Shared targets with stakeholders to support this type of work have also been agreed, through the NEET Strategy / Improving Participation and Attainment group.⁷

Warrington is performing well in reducing those individuals not in education, employment or training (NEET), with a year on year improvement since 2012, however those that remain NEET are the hardest to help with the majority being aged 17 and 18 years old, from vulnerable groups and/or from the six most deprived wards in the town. NEET in priority wards are nearly double that for Warrington as a whole, with many of those in the most deprived wards also being within a vulnerable group (ie children in care, care leavers, young offenders, learning difficulties and disabilities, teenparents, having below level 1 qualifications). It is worth noting however, that compared to both national and regional data, Warrington is performing better than average for engagement in education, employment or training (EET) for teenparents, Children in Care, and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.⁸ Warrington also has less young people classed as 'not known'⁹ than regional and national average data for all categories¹⁰.

There are further concerns on the horizon, with regards to the long term affect to the most vulnerable with regards to the welfare reform changes¹¹. There are those young people potentially caught in the 'benefit trap', whereby they believe they are better off financially by claiming benefits than they would be if they got a job, sometimes at the advice of parents and peers. Not applying for work under the new Universal Credit will not be an option. There are going to be strict sanctions applied which if not complied with will incur an automatic cease of benefit payments. The application process is carried out 'on-line', which causes concern about the ability for some to be able to use a computer, as well as actually having access to a computer with internet.

Recommendations for Commissioning

The following priorities are recommendations in order to reduce NEET and increase attainment for Warrington young people which was formulated based on a thorough analysis of the education and training needs in Warrington, as detailed in the Statement of 16 -18 Education, Training and Skills Priorities 2015-16.¹²

- Provide a range of new creative learning pathways, building on the flexibility of study programmes, to meet the needs of those young people who are required to participate in education or training.
- Ensure there is sufficient stretch and challenge for the most able young people.
- Develop further local provision to meet the needs of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

7 NEET Strategy / Improving Participation and Attainment Group is an operation group made up of professionals who work with young people and providers. See www.warrington.gov.uk for terms of reference

8 Reference to NCCIS, Risk Scan tables, December 2014

9 Definition of 'not known' are those young people where a confirmation of their current learning or work status has not yet been confirmed.

10 Reference to NCCIS, LA January 2015 Tables

11 Reference to Welfare Reform Act 2012

12 The Statement of 16-18 Education, Training and Skills Priorities 2015-16, www.warrington.gov.uk

- Provide innovative engagement activities for those young people who have disengaged from learning or work. Ensuring support is provided to overcome barriers with clear progression routes into foundation learning or pre employment programmes.
- Ensure opportunities to progress from entry level and level 1 provision for vulnerable groups (including those that live in deprivation areas, children in care/care leavers, young offenders, teenparents, and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities), increasing access to level 2 provision.
- Support the attainment of young people who were on free school meals, LLDD and Children in Care, in order to narrow the gap between these young people and their peers.
- Develop the foundation learning offer ensuring a clear focus on employability skills, including Traineeships and Supported Internships.
- Provide part-time education with employment, or apprenticeships, to those young people in employment without training.
- Develop pathways for 17 and 18 year olds to progress at the end of one or two year courses onto apprenticeships, particularly for advanced and higher level apprenticeships.
- Develop apprenticeships in areas which better reflect the employment sectors in Warrington.
- Improve the quality of apprenticeship delivery to ensure completion, particularly for advanced apprenticeships.
- Develop a participation strategy with key partners, taking greater ownership for the priorities and local responses

Who's at risk and why?

In Warrington, we identify those at risk of becoming NEET based on a set of characteristics identified from year 9 in school, based on the following multitude of risk of NEET indicators (RONI):¹³

- % attendance in school (less than 85%)
- English as an additional language (EAL)
- Exclusions (permanent or fixed term 10 or more sessions)
- Free schools meals (FSM)
- Teenage pregnancy
- Young offender (YOT)
- Attainment results at key stage 1 (below level 2), Key stage 2 (below level 3), & key stage 3 (below level 5) for maths, reading & writing and U at key stage 4 (across all subjects)
- Children in care (CIC)
- Special educational needs (SEN)
- Traveller
- Medical conditions (if it affects learning/attendance)

¹³ As determined by Department for Education funded local trials, and a local analysis of the characteristics of young people who did become NEET in Warrington.

While the schools hold statutory responsibility to provide guidance to their students, those identified at risk of NEET are provided with additional support from the Careers for Young People Service to ensure they have an appropriate education progression plan in place in order to participate in education or employment with training up to the age to 18.

¹⁴ Although we do not have the same legal status of ensuring young people participate in post 16 education as we do for pre 16 education, we do however work to clear protocols, to ensure young people are provided with all the support and encouragement needed in order to remain in education.

The level of need in the population

In January 2015, Warrington had 7,056 16 to 18 year olds (academic year) residing within the local authority area, 6,766 confirmed as being in education, employment or training (EET), and 49 had not had their present status confirmed and were classed as 'not known' (definition). 242 16 to 18 year olds reported as not being in education, employment or training (NEET), of which 178 were actively seeking employment and 63 are listed as not available. Of the 63 not available for learning or work, 35 were reported as being pregnant or a teenparent and 28 were suffering from poor health.

Out of the 242 total NEET, 75 (31%) are registered as being a member of a vulnerable group, which includes teenparents, young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), young offenders, care leavers, children in care, or have below level 2 qualifications (see appendix A for definition of qualification levels). 8 young people who are NEET are a member of more than one vulnerable group.

48% of NEET young people live within the 6 most deprived wards (there are a total of 21 wards in Warrington), and out of the 116 NEET who live in a deprived ward, 39 (33.6%) are also a member of a vulnerable group. 34 (14%) young people who are NEET were eligible for free school meals and are also members of a vulnerable group. These young people are likely to require intensive support from multi-agency professionals to support them to engage.

The biggest proportion of NEET young people are educated at Level 2 (115 – 47.5%). This is concerning as these are the most likely to be able to engage in education or training

In addition to issues with NEET, the attainment levels of those from more deprived households are not achieving as well as those from more affluent households. Overall level 2 and level 3 attainment in Warrington is above national average with both level 2 and level 3. However, attainment of those young people on free school meals has decreased at level 3 and has remained the same at level 2, therefore resulting in an increase in gap between disadvantaged young people and those more advantaged. Warrington is equal to the national average for level 2, but is below the national average in terms of actual attainment of disadvantaged young people at level 3 at age 19. Work needs to continue to increase outcomes for these young people, whether that is increasing attainment in the workplace through apprenticeships, or within full time education.¹⁵

14 The Education and Skills Act 2008

15 Department for Education, Level 2 and 3 attainment by young people aged 19 in 2014 (April 2015)

Current services in relation to need

The Careers for Young People Service provides support to NEET and those vulnerable young people at risk of NEET, to positively participate in learning or work. The service's base at Contact Warrington provides resources to help young people find a job or apprenticeship, or get onto a course. There are advisers to hand, as well as having access to computers and the internet, and real live job and apprenticeship vacancies.

The following working partnerships are in place at present, where we have a strong commitment from all partners involved:

- NEET Strategy / Improving Participation and Attainment (IPA) Group
Stakeholders are: WBC – 11-19 Learning & Achievement team, Young Peoples team, YOT team, Youth Services, Family Services, Jobcentre Plus, Golden Gates Housing, Community Area Co-ordinators, Careers for Young Peoples Service;
Providers – YMCA, Warrington Collegiate, Youth Services, Penketh High School;
Remit: to create and direct strategy to reduce NEET by reviewing the needs of young people in Warrington and providing practical solutions to barriers into learning and/or work

- Caseload Reviews
Stakeholders: 11-19 team, YOT, CiC team, Careers for Young Peoples Service
Remit: to carry out detailed caseload reviews with lead caseworkers, which are reported back to the IPA meeting

- Xpand – ESF funded NEET project
Stakeholders: Warrington Collegiate (lead), The alternative curriculum company, Arena Options, N-Gage, The Princes Trust, The Relationships Centre, Skill Force, Tim Parry Jonathan Ball Foundation for Peace, Vision4Dreams, Warrington Disability Partnership, YOT, local neighbourhood co-ordinators, 11-19 Learning & Achievement.
Remit: to provide engagement activities in deprivation areas to support the participation and progression of vulnerable NEET

- Youth Contract – SFA funded support
Stakeholders: YMCA (delivery partner), 11-19 Learning & Achievement team, Warrington providers, Youth services
Remit: to provide support to NEET young people with low academic attainment into learning or work

- Mentor Me Project
Stakeholders: Brighter Futures Team (delivery), Careers for Young People service, backed by the IPA group
Remit: to match volunteers with a young person to help raise their aspirations, to support NEET.

- Warrington Apprenticeship Gateway
Stakeholders: Warrington Borough Council (lead), Warrington apprenticeship providers, sector skills council, national apprenticeship service, vacancy matching service.

Remit: to work collaboratively to ensure the development of apprenticeships that meet the needs of the local economy, while also encouraging employer take up.

- Warrington Skills Commission

Stakeholders: Warrington Borough Council, Employers and Education Providers in Warrington

Remit: to address the skills shortage in Warrington by ensuring the education on offer correlates with the jobs available, especially relating to Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) sectors.

Projected service use and outcomes in 3-5 years and 5-10 years

The raising of the participation age (RPA)¹⁶ has now been fully implemented and in September 2015 all young people up to the age of 18 years are required to participate in some form of education, whether that is full time education, an apprenticeship, or employment with training. Warrington has seen a very positive increase in participation of 16 and 17 year olds since 2013 at the start of RPA. This has been as a result of the local authority developing a young person transfer process with schools and colleges, using an education progression plan to help support young people either to transfer into other provision, or to aide them back into education or training.

Participation rates for 16 to 18 year olds is very good in Warrington at 95.8%, compared with 91.8% regionally and 91.4% nationally, however we have 1.3% (63 young people) in employment without training, which is higher than both regional and national averages (0.8% and 0.7% respectively).¹⁷ Work does need to continue in order to ensure young people are able to get into employment, however it needs to be accompanied by appropriate training that meets the compliance requirements.

As part of the school funding reform¹⁸, high needs students have been funded through local authorities since April 2013. Although budgets are being protected at 2012/13 rates, the number of statemented/EHC (Education Health Care plans since 2014) young people needing specialist support is increasing, resulting in Warrington potentially not being able to fully meet the needs of it's residents. Further discussions are being had with the Education Funding Agency to ensure all support is provided as required.

Increasing the breadth of local provision for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a priority, and as a result of a review of Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision in Warrington, Green Lane Special School was redesignated to a 4 – 19 school, with entry criteria to the 16 - 19 provision to support those with ASD and pupils following the vulnerable groups pathway in Key Stage 4. Also, Fox Wood and Green Lane Special Schools have relocated to a site on Holes Lane (former Woolston High School) to facilitate post 16 ASD and complex needs provision.

Job seeker allowance (JSA) claimants data shows that for Warrington, the number of claimants for JSA is below the regional and national average at all ages, including 18-24

¹⁶ Education & Skills Act 2008

¹⁷ Local Authority January 2015 Tables, as part of the NCCIS reports

¹⁸ School Funding Reform Arrangements 2013-14, Department for Education, www.education.gov.uk

year olds.¹⁹ The governments youth strategy is investing in improving youth unemployment, which includes the work programme, higher pupil premium, national careers service, universal credit, to name but a few. All have been implemented to support the reduction in NEET in the coming years.

The Warrington Skills Commission²⁰ has a vision to make Warrington a borough where skills development is focussed on meeting growth needs of key business sectors in the town and where there are real opportunities for residents to develop the skills required for them to participate and benefit fully from the town's economic opportunities. There are six recommendations to support this plan, which include improving the match between the skills and qualifications of Warrington residents to that of the local employment opportunities. This work includes increasing employer engagement in schools to ensure good information advice and guidance is provided in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) industries.

Evidence of what works

There is evidence to suggest that NEET status stands in the way of individuals achieving positive productivity, social inclusion and good health. It may also perpetuate a worklessness culture that can be passed onto future generations of young people, and can result in NEET status being reinforced in families and communities across generations. NEET status affects young people's life chances and, in public policy terms, will have significant cost implications.

HM Government Horizon Scanning research paper (2014)²¹ reported on how social attitudes of young people in the UK today differ from previous generations, and how they might evolve in the future. It surmised that "Research into the determinants of differences in educational attainment between different socio-economic groups finds that a significant proportion of the difference in attainment appears to be explained by differences in parental and individual attitudes to education." It goes on to report that "There are a range of negative outcomes related with being a young person not in education employment or training (NEET), such as depression, stress, anxiety and other health issues".

The Princes Trust Youth Index Report 2015²² reports that "Among those young people who are out of work, these stressful, anxious thoughts increase significantly. More than one in ten (13 per cent) of young people often feel too anxious to leave the house, increasing to more than a third (35 per cent) of NEETs. More than a third (36 per cent) of young people often feel anxious about everyday situations, rising to 52 per cent of NEET young people. Forty-six per cent of NEETs say they avoid meeting new people, four in ten (39 per cent) find it hard to make eye contact with people and a third (33 per cent) regularly "fall apart" emotionally." The report goes on to say "The effects of anxiety can be far reaching, with it even preventing some respondents from meeting new people (42 per cent). Half (51 per cent) of jobless young people say anxiety has impacted on them being able to look for a job - twice the number of all young people (25 per cent). Forty-five per cent of young people felt they couldn't ask for help, increasing to 52 per cent amongst those who are out of work. In some instances, anxiety has stopped NEETs

19 Office for National Statistics, NOMIS, JSA claimants by age and duration (March 2015)

20 Warrington Skills Commission Report – January 2013, www.warrington.gov.uk

21 Social Attitudes of Young People, HM Government Horizon Scanning Research published 2014.

22 The Youth Index 2015, The Princes Trust Macquarie

from having positive relationships (39 per cent), eating properly (38 per cent) and learning new skills (33 per cent).”

The University of Oxford researched into the factors behind dropping out of education and determined that “ ‘disengaged’ are pupils who have no interest in school and education generally. Most of them find themselves in year 12 being NEET or having a job with no training. Ethnicity and socio economic background are the main risk factors, with white working class young people being over represented’ ²³. The report goes on to say that “white males, those whose fathers were in a routine or manual occupation and whose mothers’ level of education was low were most likely to become ‘disengaged’.”

Ofsted carried out a survey²⁴ examining the key factors that have contributed to reducing the proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds not in education, employment or training in 12 local authority areas. The survey findings made the following recommendations:

- extend opportunities for vocational learning and work with employers in order to develop a wider range of employment opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities post-16 and at the age of 19 where appropriate
- promote the greater involvement of employers in developing and implementing strategies to reduce the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training
- develop the capacity to conduct more rigorous analysis of data, to monitor and assess the quality of provision and its impact on outcomes and to evaluate the effectiveness of partnerships
- establish stronger links with Jobcentre Plus to improve the continuity of monitoring and support for young people beyond the age of 18
- extend arrangements for pooling resources to fund the development of high-quality, long-term programmes that can be sustained beyond the period of initial funding.

The Health Equity Evidence Review 3 (2014) 25 reports that the following works to reduce the proportion of young people NEET:

- Act early: strategies implemented before the age of 16 that are designed to prevent young people from becoming NEET are likely to be the most effective way of reducing local NEET levels.
- Tackle barriers and obstacles: when trying to help young people to move back into education, training or work, it is important to consider the wide range of barriers that they may face, and to help them overcome these.
- Work across organisational and geographical boundaries: successful strategies have involved collaboration and cooperation of different agencies and sectors, as well as some cross area coordination and information sharing.
- Work with local employers: getting people into work is unlikely to be successful unless local employers are involved and have a role from early on in the process.
- Track people and monitor progress: to reduce the number of people NEET, information is important: about who is NEET, but also about why they are, their history, and the agencies they are engaged with. Effective monitoring and evaluation of programmes is also essential.

²³ Young People at risk of Drop-out from Education: Recognising and Responding to their Needs, University of Oxford 2014

²⁴ Reducing the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training: what works and why, Ofsted, 2010

²⁵ Local action on health inequalities: Reducing the number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET), The Health Equity Evidence Review 3 2014, Public Health England.

- Base interventions on features of other successful programmes: there are some common features of programmes delivered or commissioned by local authorities that have worked well. This includes the content of courses, ensuring that they are accredited, not like school, and are developed and implemented in partnership with young people. There is also evidence to support using financial incentives, flexible and personalised programmes, small group sizes, one-to-one support, and helping young people to manage transitions.

(Target) Population/Service user views

The Careers for Young Peoples service is Matrix accredited (the quality standard required to deliver information advice and guidance) ²⁶, the final report stated that the service ²⁷:

“All those engaged in delivering the service appear to have fully embraced the philosophy culture and values demonstrated by the Leadership Team. Communications across the organisation, which are delivered through a well-established planning and communication process, are described as open, two-way and transparent and consequently staff feel they are at the heart of the delivering an impartial and effective information, advice and guidance service which is having a positive impact on the lives of those living and working within Warrington.

Careers for Young People work proactively with partner organisations to achieve its objectives. Feedback from those spoken to during this review was overwhelmingly positive. The relationships with a diverse range of organisations mean that staff have a wealth of knowledge and information about services and agencies to signpost and refer young people to, where appropriate. In particular the two partnership groups, Improving Participation and Attainment (IPA) Group and Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Group, who both aim: To facilitate partnership and collaborative working across Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) professionals, ensuring that statutory responsibilities are delivered, resulting in all young people being provided the opportunities to reach their educational expectations and aspirations; demonstrate how effectively partnerships can be used to monitor and improve the service. “

The Careers for Young People service carried out focus group work with 16 to 18 year olds who were participating in foundation learning programmes in Warrington. This was to ascertain why they were now participating in learning - when previously they had not, and what made them now stay in that provision. ²⁸ The following themes were prevalent:

- Although financial incentives did not come through as strong as expected on why these young people participated, or continued to participate, there is a clear link to concerns about money and affording to study.
- How comfortable the young person is with the venue is very important – to the point of the young person not going to a provider in the first place if they don't like the look of it.
- It is essential that the young person likes the tutor.
- Encouraging the group to connect with each other supports them staying in education.

²⁶ www.matrixstandard.com

²⁷ Assessment report for Warrington Borough Councils: Careers for Young Peoples service, EMQC 2013

²⁸ Focus group notes, and actions November 2013

- The delivery has to be different to a school environment.
- They do want qualifications.
- They want a job at the end of it, or increase their chances of obtaining a job.
- Young people need support to know what their career options are, the provision that is available to them, and what opportunities this can lead to.

A sample of 2,265 16-25 year olds took part in an online poll, conducted by YouGov on behalf of The Prince's Trust between 26 November and 16 December 2014.²⁹ The results identified the following relating to happiness and confidence among NEET: NEET young people are significantly less happy across all areas of their lives than their peers.

Key findings:

- The overall index (combining young people's happiness and confidence) is 71. This is a decrease on last year's index of 72.
- The index for young people's happiness has dropped by one point to 70 > The overall index rating for NEET young people has declined to 59 – down by two points from last year and five points from 2013.
- Attitudes towards money returned the lowest scores in this year's happiness index and confidence index.
- Confidence in physical health, as well as relationships with friends, fell to the lowest level in seven years.
- Employment status has a significant influence on how happy and confident young people are. NEET young people have an overall index of 59 compared to 72 for those who are in employment, education or training.
- Qualifications attained also have an impact on the index. Young people who have five or more A*-C GCSEs or Scottish Standards levels 1 or 2 rate their happiness and confidence as 71. This compares to a score of 65 among those who have fewer than five.

Spend

In 2014/15, Warrington attracted approximately £23 million funding for 16-19 year old learning provision (not including apprenticeships). Funding will drop in 2015/16 with the end of transitional protection, however participation is expected to grow in line with the raising of the participation age, therefore going forward we are having to commission more provision with less funding.

Commissioning in Warrington is carried out with the Education Funding Agency (EFA). Funding is based on a lagged learner approach, which means that the number of students providers will be funded for in 2015/16 will be based on the number of students they had enrolled in 2014/15. Some providers have been detrimentally affected by the funding changes.

Funding for high needs students transferred to local authorities in April 2013. However, there is concern that the funding is not being allocated to meet Warrington's needs ie the resulting indicative funding does not meet the needs of existing high needs students, and does not account for new learners, therefore this has been brought to ministerial attention.

²⁹ The Youth Index 2015, The Princes Trust Macquarie

Unmet needs and service gaps

Priority is being given to further develop the following:

- NEET caseload management, to ensure targeted approach to providing education, training and employment solutions. Developing work between specialist key caseworkers and providers, to ensure a match of provision is delivered against need.
- Develop multi agency protocols, procedures and communication processes to support the implementation of raising the participation age, in anticipation of the 100% participation of 18 year olds by 2015.
- Identification of, and reducing barriers to, participation in education and training. Including positive promotion of bursary funds and care to learn support, and opportunities for working while participating in learning.
- Develop and commission, where appropriate, provision which will improve participation and create better progression opportunities. Including localised, bespoke provision which will engage those young people who have not previously succeeded in learning to support them into further learning or employment.

Recommendations for Commissioning

Warrington needs to develop its' provision for those young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Ensuring young people are able to remain close to their family and friends while in learning, and meeting the budget limitations being enforced by the Education Funding Agency.

Learning participation rates at 16 years and 17 years have increased year on year since 2006, and we have to ensure that every young person of this age group is offered a place of learning in September (called the September Guarantee Offer, Department for Education). Discussions continue on an annual basis with providers to ensure they are meeting the needs of Warrington young people set out in the 'Statement of 16-19 Education, Training and Skills Priorities'. This continues to be a priority as the raising of the participation age to 18 years is fully implemented in September 2015.

The number of individuals entering into employment without training needs to be addressed in line with the Governments' commitment to raise the participation age to 18 in September 2015, ensuring support for these young people to access appropriate related training is a priority, including through Apprenticeships or other flexible training opportunities, as appropriate.

Closer working relationships with Jobcentre Plus is required, in order to support young people to deal with the Welfare Reform changes, and to be clear on the incentives of working compared to claiming benefits. The Careers for Young People will also support compliance to the Government mandatory requirements,³⁰ which could result in sanctions being issued if appropriate, including the loss of benefits due to not participating into learning or work.

Through the NEET Strategy / Improving Participation and Attainment Group, lead professionals ascertained a lack of aspirations of young people and thought these could be raised through mentoring. Also, recent research on NEET is highlighting a real link with health issues and the potential mental health barriers to young people being able to

30 Jobcentre Plus, Section 08 – Customer Benefit Sanctions and DMA _ v9

re-engage in learning or work. The Mentor Me project which was commissioned to provide personalised support to the most vulnerable young people within their own environment, is going very well, with plenty of volunteers wanting to mentor young people through difficult and challenging periods of the young person's life. Mentor Me extended its offer to support young people towards independent living, by providing a helping hand to cope with everyday issues, such as financial planning, cooking and using public transport. Also, they have started working with a school to develop a peer to peer mentoring model, where the overall hope is that those that are being mentored eventually become mentors themselves. Finally, the project is going to try to engage a youth champion from one of the deprivation areas. A young person who can support and advise on projects such as mentoring, and speak on behalf of their peers to ensure the best services for young people are being offered in their local area to improve participation in education and employment. A review of all these projects should inform our strategy around improving engagement of young people into learning or work.

Based on the performance gap of those on free school meals and taking into consideration the flexibility requirements of vulnerable groups, foundation learning programmes (below level 2 courses) are an opportunity for Warrington to develop its offer for those young people who require a range of learning opportunities at entry level and level 1 with clear progression to level 2, and potentially level 3.

Traineeships support young people's access to pre employment programmes which support progression into a job or apprenticeship, including providing work experience opportunities.

Supported internships is a work placement programme specifically designed for young people with special educational needs (SEN) to support them into employment, unfortunately Warrington has a very limited local offer at present which does not meet the SEN young peoples needs of the area.

Apprenticeships remain a priority in Warrington. Further work is required to build up apprenticeships across the sector base, especially with regards to the economic requirements of the area. Overall Apprenticeship framework success rates amongst Warrington residents decreased by 1% in 2012/13 to 67.9%, and remains below regional and national averages (71.6% and 70.3% respectively). Working with the National Apprenticeship Service and the Skills Funding Agency, we will increase the quality of provision on offer in Warrington

Recommendations for needs assessment work

There is a need for continuous review of provision, using both data analysis and anecdotal feedback from young people, as part of the Statement of education, learning and skills priorities for Warrington. Also, where possible to carry out young people's participation to feed into the service development.

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