

Cabinet Member Education and Skills	Ref No:
November 2019	Key Decision: Yes
Post-16 Support Budget Savings	Part I
Report by Director of Education and Skills	Electoral Divisions: All

Summary

The Post-16 Support service provides interventions and careers guidance for young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs), and also helps organise and support Careers/Apprenticeship Fairs across the county and the annual Apprenticeship Graduation Ceremony.

The County Council has a statutory duty to promote participation of 16-18 year olds in education or employment and to track the destinations of all young people in years 12 and 13 and anyone with an Education Health and Care Plan(EHCP) up to the age of 25. Tracking of this cohort involves uploads of information from schools and colleges which is undertaken by the Data and Intelligence Team. This identifies how many young people's destinations are Not Known. These individuals are then followed up and supported by the Post-16 service.

The County Council has been identifying potential savings options to assist in closing the budget gap following reductions in government grant. In this respect an assessment has been carried out on the impact of reducing the level of support of, or completely withdrawing from, provision of the Post-16 Support service. There are two options that have been considered:

- **Option 1:** To reduce the level of support provided by the core Post-16 Support Service by 50% from April 2021.
- **Option 2:** To completely withdraw from the provision of Post-16 Support with effect from April 2021.

Following analysis of the impact and financial implications of these two options it is proposed that the Cabinet Member is asked to support Option 1.

West Sussex Plan: Policy Impact and Context

Best Start in Life

The West Sussex Plan aims to support an environment that allows every child in West Sussex the opportunity to reach their full potential. Reducing the level of support will have a negative impact on the number of direct interventions that are available to young people who are the furthest from education.

Prosperous Place

A prosperous Place priority aims to ensure that West Sussex has a workforce that is skilled and equipped to engage with and contribute to the local economy. One of the measures in the West Sussex Plan is the percentage of NEETs. Reducing the level of support will have a negative impact on the number of young people who are able

to contribute to the prosperity of West Sussex.

Financial Impact

The proposed Post-16 Service budget savings in 2020/21 will be £0.110m under both options. In 2021/22, under the reduction option (1) additional savings of £0.130m will be delivered, whereas under the complete withdrawal option (2) the additional savings will amount to £0.375m.

Recommendations

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills is asked to approve the reduction in the level of support provided by the core Post-16 Support Service by 50% from April 2021.

Proposal

1 Background and Context

- 1.1 The work of the Post-16 Support Team has had a significant impact in helping to prevent young people becoming NEET and to re-engage those young people already NEET into education, training and employment. Following changes in responsibility from the local authority to schools for the delivery of careers information, advice and guidance the team gradually reduced its support in schools (pre-NEETs) to focus exclusively on working directly with NEET young people.
- 1.2 The majority of NEET young people present with a wide range of complex needs and issues. Typically, this cohort includes children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), children looked after, young offenders, those with family and social issues, young people from families with housing and financial difficulties, those with English as a second language, young people with mental health issues, pregnant young people and teenage parents and others who had poor or no school attendance in their final year.
- 1.3 In the academic year 2018/19 the team worked with over 500 NEET young people. A fifth of these moved back into sustainable education, training or employment options. There has been an increase on last year's NEET figures and, in particular, a significant increase over the last 6 months. The positive aspect of this is that great strides have been made over the last year to improve the accuracy of data collection. As improvements are made in tracking more NEET young people will be identified. This particularly explains the recent increase of NEET. There is expected to be a significant increase in the number of young people who the County Council are working with entering EET in the autumn as many are currently waiting to enrol onto post-16 courses commencing in September.

West Sussex Headline Figures July 2019/July 2018 comparison

Measure	West Sussex 2019	West Sussex 2018	Change
% of NEETs	3.1%	2.3%	0.8%
Number of NEETs	515	393	122
% of Not Knowns	8.2%	8.4%	-0.2%
Number of Not Knowns	1345	1446	101

% of NEET & Not Knowns	11.3	10.7	0.6%
Number of NEET & Not Knowns	1860	1839	21

- 1.4 The government monitors and publishes league tables on Local Authority performance in relation to NEETs and the number of young people whose destination is Not Known. Every September the cohort is reset and all 16-18 year olds become Not Known until the local authority can establish their destination.
- 1.5 The County Council has historically performed badly in relation to tracking the destination of young people and is in the bottom quintile for this performance measure. The Minister for Skills has written to the Council on a number of occasions, most recently in the autumn of 2018, seeking assurance that the Local Authority is taking steps to address this.
- 1.6 A successful bid for a European Social Investment Fund (ESIF) grant has enabled funding of additional fixed term posts within the team .The grant covers a three year period and finishes on 31st December 2020. The project backed by ESIF aims to identify, engage and support young people who are NEET in order to re-engage them into education, training or employment. A requirement of the programme is that a number of posts within the Post 16 Support team will have significant amounts of their time redeployed to this project. The County Council lead on the project with the other delivery partners originally being Surrey County Council and Brighton and Hove Council. Surrey County Council withdrew from the project in April 2019.
- 1.7 The timing of the proposed change to the service and resulting budgetary savings has been planned to take effect after the end of the ESIF programme to enable the County Council to complete the work that it has been contracted to deliver. Implementing savings prior to this date would seriously impact the County Council's remaining partner in the programme, Brighton and Hove. It would also increase the risk of WSCC not meeting targets and being financially penalised by the Department of Work and Pensions who retain the right to clawback funding for non achievement.

2. Proposal Details

2.1 Option 1: Reduction in the Post-16 Support Service

- 2.1.1 Core staff and ESIF posts would remain in place until the end of the ESIF programme. A smaller NEET support team would work from one central location, providing careers information, advice, guidance and support for all 16-18 year old NEETS .The service would also be available for those NEET young people up to the age of 25 if they previously held an Education, Health and Care Plan.
- 2.1.2 The core of the service would be telephone and web-based interventions. The team would operate a triage system so that the most vulnerable young people have the opportunity to engage in face-to-face interventions at locations near where they live, or in their own home. This would, however, be a limited service.

- 2.1.3 The team would continue to make a significant contribution to the tracking of 16 and 17 year olds in order to establish their EET status and ensure support was offered where needed. They would have a major impact on the Council's intention to improve their NEET and Not Knowns performance so that WSCC are no longer in the bottom quintile nationally.
- 2.1.4 All the team will be qualified, (or supported to qualify through the apprenticeship programme) to a minimum of Level 6 Careers and Guidance in order to ensure a quality of independent guidance and support is provided for every young person.
- 2.1.5 The team would be offered as a Traded Service to schools, to provide quality guidance to prevent NEET. There may also be opportunities to support schools in improving their careers guidance, especially where there are schools struggling to ensure positive outcomes for their most vulnerable pupils.
- 2.1.6 The team will explore and work with voluntary and community sector organisations within West Sussex who offer support for NEET young people. Where there is merit in commissioning some additional NEET work within these organisations to better ensure local support this will be developed. The Team would retain a small core budget.

2.2 Option 2: Complete Withdrawal of the Post-16 Support Service

- 2.2.1 Complete withdrawal of the service would mean that direct support and intervention for NEETs by trained Careers Advisers would be replaced by indirect support using external agencies. WSCC would signpost support for NEETs to the National Careers Service and any appropriate voluntary sector organisations through an increased presence and online link on its corporate website. Core staff and ESIF posts would remain in place until the end of the ESIF programme. All ESIF fixed Term contracts would cease as of 31st December 2020, with all staff leaving by 31st March 2021. Support for Apprenticeship events and Careers Fairs would cease as would the annual Apprentice Graduation Ceremony. The resource of the Post-16 Support Team would no longer be available to assist with tracking of Not Knowns during peak periods during the Autumn and Spring Terms.
- 2.2.2 The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills is asked to support option 1 rather than option 2 in order to provide continuity of service for the most vulnerable NEETs. During the ESIF project the Post-16 team will have identified and engaged with hundreds of young people who will need continued support to enable them to move on to education, employment or training. If the service was completely withdrawn and the Council moved to signposting, there would be a risk that the most vulnerable groups would not transition successfully or that there would not be appropriate support outside of the Council to absorb the numbers of young people no longer being helped by the Post-16 team. Complete withdrawal of the service would also mean that support for tracking would reduce, that Apprenticeship events and the Graduation ceremony would cease. The cumulative impact of this would negatively impact local communities

Factors taken into account

3. Consultation

- 3.1 Members – The Children and Young People’s Services Select Committee will review the proposal at the meeting on 23rd October 2019.
- 3.2 Staff have been kept informed of the need to reduce or withdraw Post-16 Support and will be consulted regarding the structure of any reduced future service if Option 1 is agreed and when the budget for the service has been signed off after February 2020.

4. Financial (revenue and capital) and Resource Implications

4.1 Revenue Consequences of Option 1

- 4.1.1 A summary of the budgetary impact of the savings associated with Option 1 is set out in the table below. These savings are based on the proposed staff reductions set out in section 4.3.

	Current Year 2019/20 £m	Year 2 2020/21 £m	Year 3 2021/22 £m	Year 4 2022/23 £m
Core Team Budget	0.485	0.485	0.485	0.485
Saving	n/a	-0.110	-0.240	-0.240
Remaining Budget	0.485	0.375	0.245	0.245

4.2 Revenue Consequences of Option 2

- 4.2.1 A summary of the budgetary impact of the savings associated with Option 2 is set out in the table below. Again these savings are based on the proposed staff reductions set out in section 4.3.

	Current Year 2019/20 £m	Year 2 2020/21 £m	Year 3 2021/22 £m	Year 4 2022/23 £m
Core Team Budget	0.485	0.485	0.485	0.485
Saving	n/a	-0.110	-0.485	-0.485
Remaining Budget	0.485	0.375	Nil	Nil

4.3 Human Resources

- 4.3.1 The Post-16 Service currently has 11.2 full time equivalent (fte) in its core team, and a further 5.0 fte funded through the ESIF grant until 31st

December 2020. These grant funded posts will also be removed from the team's establishment when the grant ceases at the end of December 2020.

4.3.2 There are currently 2.5 fte vacancies within the core team, and these posts will be deleted from 1st April 2020 no matter which savings option is selected. It is not proposed to reduce the number of posts within the core team any further next year as this is likely to have a significant impact on the County Council being able to complete the work that it has been contracted to deliver as part of the ESIF project.

4.3.3 Under Option 2 (withdrawal) all the remaining posts in the Post-16 Service will be deleted from 1st April 2021. However, as the proposal is to select Option 1 the exact number of posts being given up in 2021/22 will depend on the outcome of the staff consultation on the structure of the reduced service.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 There is no legal obligation to provide face to face intervention for NEETs. The Post-16 Support Team leads on the Council's Duty under Section 10 Education and Skills Act 2008: 'Local authorities must promote the effective participation in education and training of 16 and 17 year olds in their area with a view to ensuring that those persons fulfil the duty to participate in education or training', however there is no legal obligation to provide face to face intervention for NEETs.

5.2 The team also makes a significant contribution to the Council's Duty under Section 12 Education and Skills Act 2008: Local Authorities are required to identify young people not participating so that they can ensure that these young people get the support they need. Identification of NEETs will continue through tracking performed by the Data Team and the individual follow up for those in most need by the reduced team.

6. Risk Implications and Mitigations

Option 1: Reduction in Post-16 Support Service

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
Some more vulnerable young people will need more intensive support from the team than could be realistically provided.	Although a more limited service, a county wide reach will remain in place and the triage system will identify individuals who require the most support. Monitoring of caseload by District and Borough will be in place. Year on year comparisons will be recorded to establish the impact on overall interventions. The triage system, supported by a central team will focus on those most in need
There will be a negative impact on the wellbeing and mental health of young people in West Sussex who are not able to access support through ill health or poverty. This may also	The SEN Inclusion Strategy will support work with schools to reduce the number of pupil exclusions. New ways of working will need to be established with other Local Authority services such as Children's Services/ Early Help Teams and referrals monitored to

increase demand on other Local Authority services	manage demand.
There will be an increased risk of young people being exploited and targeted by gangs operating County Lines, being involved in knife crime or other criminal activity	The triage system will identify and support those most in need of direct intervention. Work with schools on reducing exclusions is a key element of the SEN Inclusion strategy.

7. Other Options Considered (and reasons for not proposing)

- 7.1 Do nothing. This is not an option due to the need for Education and Skills to make savings that contribute to closing the budgetary gap. Post -16 support has been identified as a non-statutory service where it is possible to change the ways of working in order to provide a level of support for those most in need while reducing the core staffing budget.

8. Equality and Human Rights Assessment

- 8.1 The implications of reducing service provision within the County will mean that direct support for NEETs will be available via a triage system within the Local Authority. Young people in the most need may need to travel further in order to gain access to support. This may disproportionately impact those who have the most complex needs and are from the poorest backgrounds.

9. Social Value and Sustainability Assessment

- 9.1 The proposal to reduce Post-16 Support for NEETs may have a negative impact on communities and the local economy. Young people who are the furthest from the workplace will have fewer opportunities for face to face intervention and support to engage with training or employment. Although a triage system will be in place, West Sussex has a big geographical footprint with areas of deprivation and poor rural transport links. Not all those who need the most support may be able to afford travelling further to access help in a timely fashion. This will increase the risk of disengaged young people suffering mental health issues and low self- esteem.

10. Crime and Disorder Reduction Assessment

The reduction in the service increases the risk of disengaged young people being targeted by gangs involved in criminal activities such as County Lines. Young people who are NEET and disadvantaged in the labour market are more likely to engage in offending and/or anti-social behaviour, or be criminally and/or sexually exploited. Education, Training and Employment (ETE) is a factor for desistance from offending behaviour. Once in the criminal justice system, young people will find it harder to desist from offending behaviour and their options for re-engagement in society and ETE become more limited due to holding a criminal record, feelings of failure and low self-esteem, and increased bond to offending peers and the lifestyle this

brings. Those with a statement of SEN are disproportionately represented in youth crime statistics. In a joint Ministry of Justice and Department of Education report 'Understanding the education background of young offenders' published in 2016, it was found that for young offenders sentenced in 2014 that were at the end of Key Stage 4 in academic year 2012/13 'There were a greater proportion with SEN, with and without a Statement when compared to overall pupil population at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2012/13. Therefore the reduction in service could limit the ability to engage those with SEN in ETE and negatively impact on efforts to reduce the number of SEN engaged in crime.

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Background papers - None

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