

Question 2.

Response of the Cabinet Members for Education Improvement & Learning and Children's Services Young People

Swansea have a well-established and long running NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) Board, currently chaired by the Cabinet Member for Education Improvement and Learning and comprising of strong representation from our key partners. The work of the board ensures that there is significant scrutiny, oversight and robust challenge to the developments and performance of the work with NEET young people in Swansea.

Swansea's ***Keeping in Touch Strategy*** and the implementation of the Welsh Government's ***Engagement and Progression Framework*** have supported the Council and its partner's good progress in reducing the numbers of NEET young people at 16-18 years by focussing on the following factors:

- Identifying young people most at risk of NEET;
- Better brokerage and coordination of support;
- Stronger tracking and measurement of the transitions of young people through the system;
- Ensuring provision meets the needs of young people;
- Strengthening employability skills and opportunities for young people;
- Greater accountability for better outcomes for young people.

This work has supported a downward trend in the proportion of Year 11 school leavers who were NEET across Wales between 2008 and 2015. The NEET rate for Year 11 school leavers has fallen from 5.8% in 2008 to 2.7% in 2015, 2.1% in 2016 and 2.2% in 2017. This is slightly above the current Welsh average of 1.7%.

The analysis of this data by the NEET board suggests that the Swansea figure has not progressed further over the past 2 years due to the complex needs of a core group of NEETs. Further analysis shows that nearly 70% (158 of 225, July 2018) of this group are either 'not available' or 'not ready' to enter employment or training. The board have recognised that this core group of NEETs require specialist support to get them ready to enter employment or training.

In this core group, specific barriers to employment or training identified through the work of the ***Keeping in Touch Strategy*** include:

- Social and health factors (e.g. drugs and alcohol, mental health, behavioural and emotional, lack of parental support, confidence and motivation);
- Skills-related factors (e.g. Additional Learning Needs, employability, work experience, training, qualifications); and
- Wider structural factors (e.g. housing, transport, childcare, money for work related items).

The NEET board recognises that to meet the complex needs of this group requires individualised tailored support to fill gaps progressing into employment or training.

The following projects and change initiatives categorised as prevention approaches or provision for young people who are already NEET have developed and bolstered existing provision to help towards achieving this:

NEETS Prevention And Early Intervention

Cynnydd

A regional project led by Pembrokeshire County Council, in partnership with five other local authorities: Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea. It targets young people (11-24 year olds) identified as being at very greatest risk of becoming NEET and works to reduce this risk. It delivers specific activities and interventions to these identified learners/young people. 780 participants have been allocated across secondary schools and pupil referral units over the project duration. Swansea Council is managing the work in secondary schools. Gower College are managing their separate allocation of 16-24 year olds within the college. Project duration is currently 01.03.2016 to 29.02.2019.

EOTAS Strategy and Investment

Pupils, who leave mainstream schools to be educated in our Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), often have poor outcomes and a significantly higher chance of becoming NEET. Consequently, we have committed to changes and investment including:

- A new senior leadership and support team providing:
 - o Effective leadership of the PRU;
 - o Improved academic and wider outcomes for learners in the PRUs;
 - o Effective partnerships with all stakeholders;
 - o Increase in number of learners being educated in mainstream schools;
 - o A clear definition of SEBD (social, emotional and behavioural difficulties) in Swansea and an effective strategy to support the wellbeing and behaviour of all learners;
 - o Effective prevention and early identification, providing a wrap-around support team for schools and learners to increase the number of learners educated in mainstream schools; and
 - o Support for schools, learners and families ensuring measurable progress.

Provision For Young People Who Are NEET

Cam Nesa

A £5.7 M, EU funded, regional project led by Pembrokeshire County Council, delivered in partnership with five other local authorities: Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea. It aims to provide a range of engagement, learning and training activities for 16-24 year olds to reduce youth unemployment and the number of young people who are already NEET, whilst increasing the attainment levels of 16-24 year olds who are already NEET.

The Swansea allocation of £1,281,120 has supported the expansion of the recently established ***Evolve lead work team*** within our Young People Services. This team work intensively with young people and their families to develop individual wellbeing and NEET focussed plans, supporting them to overcome complex barriers that can prevent their progress. Using a partnership approach across our schools, PRU and careers, strong data tracking ensures that we offer all NEET young people the opportunity to get support and stop duplication across our various programmes.

The Evolve NEET team are at Info-nation, a co-located hub of services for young people, meeting young people's needs. Services include our Post 16 Bays+ Service, an innovative partnership between Barnardos and our Child and Family Team, supporting our most vulnerable young people, care leavers and looked after children. Our data analysis shows this group to have a disproportionately high percentage of NEETs due to their complex barriers. This service integration is essential to meet the needs of these young people and in our corporate parent duties.

Communities for Work

The European Social Fund (ESF) funded Communities for Work project works in partnership with Communities and Jobcentre Plus. The Welsh Government is the lead body for the project and Swansea Council are the local delivery body. The project focusses on reducing the number of NEETs aged 16-24 whilst increasing the employability of the economically inactive and long term unemployed aged 25 and over with complex barriers to employment. The project is funded to 31 March 2020.

Swansea Working

Swansea working is the overarching employability approach of Swansea Council and our key partners. We aim to simplify access to support for local people of working age who are out of work or 'poor employed', giving them one place to call and support tailored to their individual needs. The approach 'hides the wiring' of multiple funding streams and approaches, including Cam Nesa and Communities for Work above. Swansea Working makes it easy to get in touch and enables employability support for those who need it, when and where they need it in Swansea.

The Future

We hope that over the coming years these projects are able to meet the needs of this core group of NEET's in Swansea and see continued progress with our performance. We recognise that this challenge is not simplistic and has many interdependencies.

We are already in the process of developing our exit strategies given the timescales on such a large number of European projects. We are identifying opportunities through the Welsh Government Working Wales programme, which we hope will further build on our current provision

For information, the latest national NEET statistics are on the Welsh Government Website. Links to the documents are below:

Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

<https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/young-people-not-education-employment-training/?lang=en>

Participation of young people in education and the labour market

<https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/participation-young-people-education-labour-market/?lang=en>