

20 March 2013		ITEM: 8
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
REPORT ON THURROCK RAISING PARTICIPATION ACTION PLAN		
Report of: Vivien Cutler, Interim Lead, School Improvement, Learning and Skills		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Accountable Head of Service: Carmel Littleton, Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes		
Accountable Director: Jo Olsson, Director of People Services		
This report is Public		
Date of notice given of exempt or confidential report: N.A.		
Purpose of Report: to outline the drivers for change nationally and locally to raise the participation in learning age and to describe the key elements of Thurrock's Plan to support full participation.		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Department for Education (DfE) is raising the age to which all young people in England must continue in education or training. This will become;

- 2013: the end of the academic year in which they turn 17
- 2015: until their 18th birthday

This paper summarises current and planned activity to support full participation in learning to meet these new statutory requirements in Thurrock. Full participation at 17 by 2013 will require progression into post-16 learning by all current year 11 students.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1.1 That Overview and Scrutiny comments on the Plan and suggests ways in which it might wish to contribute to monitoring the impact of its implementation.**

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 2.1 National Context: The Education and Skills Act 2008**

The coalition government has maintained the commitment to raise participation in learning to 18 by 2015 brought into statute through the Education and Skills Act 2008. Young people will be able to choose full-time education, an apprenticeship or combine part-time education (around 20 hours p.w.) with full-time employment or volunteering.

- 2.1.1 Under the Education and Skills Act 2008, local authorities are responsible for promoting the participation of all 16 and 17 year old residents in learning and for identifying and tracking young people who are not participating. These duties sit alongside existing responsibility to secure sufficient education and training provision for all young people in the area and to provide support to encourage and enable them to participate.
- 2.1.2 Government policy subsequent to the 2008 Act has reduced some of the financial drivers supporting increased participation. The 16-19 Bursary Fund does not have the scope of the Education Maintenance Allowance. The funding accessed by post-16 institutions is planned to accommodate raised participation without an increase in overall 16-19 budget. This particularly impacts on those learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (LLDD).
- 2.1.3 Schools now have a statutory responsibility for making sure that all pupils are informed about the full range of local post-16 options and have access to independent careers advice in years 9-11 to support their choice.

2.2 Local Progress

Thurrock has seen a steady reduction in young people NEET 16-18 and in those whose status is not known. Participation in full-time learning, however, has not demonstrated the same positive trend, although the most recent data shows improvement over the previous year.

- 2.2.1 While Thurrock performance in reducing 16-19* NEET benchmarks positively against the national, comparisons with London and Essex 16-18 suggest perhaps more can be achieved. Local data indicates continuing improvement. The most recent benchmarking data was published by the DfE in June 2012:

NEET 2011/12	Thurrock	National	London	Essex
16-18	6.8%	8.1%	4.5%	6.4%
16	4.3%	2.8%	2.5%	3.9%
17	6.8%	6.7%	4.5%	6.5%
18	9.2%	14.5%	6.3%	8.8%

* The national measurement focuses on 16-18 year olds and the performance indicator locally will be changed to reflect this from April 2013.

Whilst we are awaiting the national data release for 2012-13, the table below shows our performance in 2011-12 compared to statistical neighbours, east of England and England. National rates will have changed for 2012-13 and

once these have been released a reliable comparison of our performance against national can be made.

16-19 year olds	Thurrock 2011-12 %	Statistical Neighbours 2011-12 %	East of England 2011-12 %	England 2011-12 %	Thurrock 2012-13 %
Unknown	7.4	10.27	10.9	9.4	3.3
NEET	6.8	6.4	6.0	6.1	6.0
In Learning	78.5	78.4	76.9	79.7	80.8

2.2.2 Sustained progress towards the 2013 and 2015 deadlines will require the engagement of those young people who find it most difficult to find a relevant, fulfilling and sustainable programme of post-16 learning.

2.2.3 It will also require action to reduce the number of young people who do progress into post-16 learning but do not complete their chosen course. While our information about post-16 drop out is not yet robust, there are indications that this is higher than we would wish amongst young people on all levels of post-16 programme.

2.2.4 Raised participation in learning is essential to raised attainment by 19 and to meet the aspirations of the Corporate Plan. Thurrock has made steady progress but remained last year below national benchmark for level 2 attainment by 19 (77% compared to 84%) and level 3 attainment by 19 (46% compared to 57%) in 2010/11 (level 2 equates to 5 GCSEs A*-C, level 3 to 2 A levels)

2.2.5 Those young people who have not reached the Level 2 threshold by 16 are least likely to continue in learning and need to have a choice of engaging learning options, including Apprenticeships, to enable them to achieve at Level 2 after 16. Those young people who are studying at Level 3 need to be following programmes that they can sustain and to achieve qualifications that do not simply meet the level threshold but enable them to move successfully on to work or further study in increasingly competitive job and HE markets.

2.3 2013/14 Raising Participation Action Plan

Thurrock has, through the active support of the local authority, maintained the strategic partnerships that are critical to meeting the commitments to young people in its Health and Well-Being Strategy and to its statutory duty to promote full participation. Raised participation secured through a responsive 14-19 offer has been a consistent focus of partnership work.

2.3.1 The 2013/14 Raising Participation Action Plan was adopted in January by the 11-19 Strategy Group of headteachers and college principals to sharpen this focus and give added pace to joint activity as the statutory deadlines approach. The Plan is a framework for action that will be driven by the 11-19 Delivery Group and steered by the 11-19 Strategic Group.

2.3.2 There are six key strands of activity through which this will be achieved

- Informing Choice: ensuring all young people have full, accessible and impartial information about local post-16 options and partners can review the local offer
- Evidencing Priorities: ensuring partnership activities are informed by robust information about learning needs and educational performance
- Clarifying KS4 Alternatives: for those young people who disengage from school and are least likely to progress after year 11
- Strengthening NEET prevention: to ensure early intervention for those most at risk and support full progression.
- Reducing 16-19 Drop Out: for those who move on at 16 but are unable to sustain and complete their chosen course.
- Preparing for Local Jobs: by ensuring pupils from year 9 onwards have opportunities to learn about the full range of carers from local employers and experienced practitioners.

- 2.3.3 Actions to inform choice include provision of a searchable online local prospectus; a review of the breadth and balance local provision through progression maps and exploration of co-ordinated application and improved tracking. UCAS Progress has been selected and commissioned to host the Thurrock post-16 offer as part of a developing nation-wide online prospectus. This will ensure that young people know about their post-16 options and that schools meet their new information responsibilities
- 2.3.4 Actions to evidence priorities will strengthen the collection, reporting and sharing of 14-19 performance data and ensure partners have better information about underlying performance to focus efforts on improving headline outcomes.
- 2.3.5 Clarification of KS4 alternative provision for those who are disengaged will set threshold standards for niche provision; agree common performance reporting and sharing effective practice and explore borough-wide solutions for specialist needs including the language needs of recent arrivals.
- 2.3.6 Actions to strengthen NEET prevention will reinforce joint working between schools, Thurrock Careers and specialist local authority teams to identify, support and track young people at risk, drawing on evidence to evaluate interventions and spread effective practice.
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- 2.3.8 Action to prepare young people for local jobs is designed to support wider local skills initiatives and to develop a structured framework for employer contributions to learning. Employers will work with schools and colleges to raise awareness, develop enterprise skills and support career planning for pupils at all levels of attainment. A framework has been adopted by the Logistics Operational Group and will trial new partnership activity between employers and schools.

2.3.9 The Plan agreed by the 11-19 Strategic Group is a framework to be developed in action. The 11-19 Delivery Group will manage operational implementation. Thurrock Learning and Skills and Thurrock Careers teams are key members of this Group and will lead significant elements of this work. Specialist contributions from local authority teams with responsibility for education data, looked after children and care leavers, young people in the criminal justice system, special educational needs and regeneration will also be critical to its success.

3. ISSUES, OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS:

3.1 The choice of an independent provider for the online local information prospectus was made as a result of previous experience, not wholly positive and relatively costly, of developing an Area Wide Prospectus.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

4.1 UCAS Progress was chosen over an Essex-based provider as UCAS is a nationally recognised brand with a strong infrastructure, offers value for money and it enables students and providers to look beyond Essex to research or market their courses.

5. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the 11-19 Scrutiny Group (q.v.) A further briefing will be made available to Overview and Scrutiny once the Level 2 and 3 @ 19 data for 2012 is received.

6. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

6.1 This report is fully aligned to the council priority to improve the education and skills of local residents.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Sean Clark**
 Telephone and email: **01375 652010**
sclark@thurrock.gov.uk

Pump prime funding of £3,500 is required to support the training for and implementation of UCAS Progress and can be met from within existing budgets.

7.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lucinda Bell**
Telephone and email: **01375 652204**
lbell@thurrock.gov.uk

There are no direct legal implications.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Samson DeAlyn**
Telephone and email: **01376 652472**
sdealyn@thurrock.gov.uk

The Raising Participation Age Plan is designed to encourage the full participation of all young people in learning and training post-16 in order to narrow the gap and to enhance the quality of life outcomes for the age group.

7.4 **Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental**

7.4.1 Sustainability could be put at risk without continued financial support for Thurrock Careers and for the specialist teams that will deliver other aspects of the Plan.

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- The Education & Skills Act, 2008

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

- None

Report Author Contact Details:

Name: Vivien Cutler
Telephone: 01375 652539
E-mail: vcutler@thurrock.gov.uk