

<b>10 December 2013</b>		<b>ITEM : 6</b>
<b>Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>		
<b>Raising of the Participation Age (RPA)</b>		
<b>Report of:</b> Michael Peters, Strategic Lead, School Improvement, Learning & Skills and Michele Lucas, Learning & Skills.		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Non-Key	
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Carmel Littleton, Director of Children's Services		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Carmel Littleton, Director of Children's Services		
<b>This report is:</b> Public		
<b>Purpose of Report:</b> to provide an update on the delivery of the requirement to deliver the plan on Raising the Participation Age (RPA)		

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**1.1 Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes progress on the delivery of the duty relating to Raising the Participation Age (RPA).**

**2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:**

2.1 The purpose of this report is to advise members of progress on meeting the duty regarding Raising the Participation Age (RPA) and promoting the participation of 16- and 17-year-olds in education or training.

2.2 The overarching duties for RPA are included in the Education and Skills Act 2008. This legislation sets out that from 2015, all 16- and 17-year-olds will be required to continue in education or training. This change is happening in two phases: from the start of the 2013/14 academic year, all young people will be required to continue in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17. From 2015 they will be required to continue until their 18th birthday.

2.3 The economy and the world of employment are changing. More and more jobs within the UK economy in the future will require a higher level of skills, training and qualifications. The changes to the participation age will help

prepare our young people for successful careers and will help equip the UK workforce for the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

- 2.4 The new duty does not require every young person to remain in school until the age of 18 but requires them to participate in education, training or employment/with training. This includes a range of other learning opportunities available — offered by employers and training providers as well — including Traineeships, Apprenticeships, Diplomas, voluntary work and jobs with training.
- 2.5 The Local Authority has been working in partnership with a range of agencies to support the process by helping to raise the aspirations of young people, reminding them about the benefits of staying in learning (and the requirement to do so until 18) and signposting them to suitable sources of further information, advice and guidance from Thurrock Careers who have recently achieved Matrix accreditation.
- 2.6 **Progress in Thurrock on implementing the new duty.** A detailed plan has been prepared and is being implemented. This is helping to drive the range of provision available to young people. It is being led by the 11-19 Strategic Group – made up of local schools, academies, colleges, businesses and the council. The group, chaired by a secondary school headteacher, has worked together to prepare Thurrock for the introduction of RPA. This means looking at the education pathways – for example the curriculum courses offered, traineeships and apprenticeships available in a wide range of sectors.
- 2.7 There is an offer for young people which includes academic and vocational provision at the College, school 6<sup>th</sup> forms and a range of employers including Thurrock Council. The introduction of traineeships has enabled Thurrock Adult Community College to deliver traineeships supporting those young people not in education employment or training, the sectors include childcare, logistics and in January 2014 health and social care.
- 2.8 One of the important features of RPA is ensuring that young people have high quality information advice and guidance on available opportunities and pathways. The recent Opportunity Thurrock Event was successful in enabling young people to gain a greater understanding of the potential job opportunities that will be available in Thurrock and the education pathways to access these opportunities.
- 2.9 The 11-19 Strategy Group is in the process of developing its pastoral support to identify young people who are risk of becoming ‘Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET) and offer additional support before they fall out of the system.
- 2.10 The RPA plan has 6 priorities. An overview of progress on each is summarised below

2.11 **Priority 1 Inform and deliver choice.** The key aspect of this being that each local to authority ensuring that the *September Guarantee* is delivered. This means that every young person must have an offer to participate. A suitable offer will:

- be of a place on a specific course in school, college, with an independent provider, or apprenticeship.
- include both the training element and a job or work placement where this is a condition of the young person taking up the place.
- be appropriate to the young person’s individual needs - this means it must be at the right level, geographical location, occupational sector and learning method.
- include an agreed start date.

2.12 The most recent comparative figures (2012) for local authority performance the East of England is show below;

	16 and 17 year olds	Offer made (%)	Offer not appropriate (%)	No offer (%)	Not Recorded (%)
<b>ENGLAND</b>	<b>1,152,234</b>	<b>92.4%</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>4.1%</b>
<b>EAST OF ENGLAND</b>	<b>130,044</b>	<b>91.5%</b>	<b>2.7%</b>	<b>2.0%</b>	<b>3.8%</b>
Bedford Borough	3,611	92.9%	1.0%	3.1%	3.0%
Cambridgeshire	12,944	92.7%	2.9%	2.6%	1.8%
Central Bedfordshire	5,183	93.2%	1.3%	1.3%	4.1%
Essex	32,098	89.6%	2.7%	2.1%	5.6%
Hertfordshire	25,897	92.8%	3.0%	1.9%	2.3%
Luton	5,029	93.3%	0.9%	4.4%	1.3%
Norfolk	18,035	91.3%	3.8%	1.3%	3.6%
Peterborough	4,762	91.1%	2.2%	3.9%	2.7%
Southend	2,909	87.8%	0.6%	0.4%	11.2%
Suffolk	15,886	90.6%	2.9%	1.6%	4.9%
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>3,690</b>	<b>97.0%</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>

2.13 The Council is significantly above both East of England and national levels of performance. For September 2013 this has increased to 2013 Yr 11 99.8% for Year 11 students and has decreased to 94.8% for Year 12 students. (The decrease in Year 12 students receiving an offer was due to slight variations around specific provision availability. This is being addressed.)

**2.14 Priority 2 - Knowing the Cohort & Strengthen NEET Prevention**

As a result of close working relationships with Thurrock Careers and the

imbedding of systems which has enabled us to gain a greater understanding of what young people who are in the NEET Cohort are looking for, a monthly meeting takes place to scrutinise the data which includes sections which identify what young people are looking to engage with. This informs our work with the Skills Funding Agency around the commissioning of NEET programmes within Thurrock. The latest round of ESF NEET funding has been commissioned and we are in contact with the new contract holders to ensure that we match the requirements of Thurrock young people to the provision that is being delivered.

### **2.15 Priority 3: Progression Support and Transition**

To ensure we meet the needs of all Thurrock learners we working closely with our schools with specific target work undertaken in Year 11, this includes undertaking an activity survey which is completed by all year 11 students to gain a greater understanding of the progression pathways they have identified and how we can work closely with Post-16 providers to ensure we have the provision in student led courses. An example of transition is the work undertaken with our Care Leavers, these young people are offered a bespoke package to enable them to progress onto suitable programmes, and this work is undertaken in partnership with colleagues from the Social Care team.

Thurrock has successfully developed an internal apprenticeship programme which looks to provide a range of opportunities for young people. The target in 2012/13 was 55 was achieved and a target set of 65 for the financial year 2013/14. The current position as of end October 2113 is 45. The programme offers young people the chance to progress onto a Level 3 programme (A Level equivalent), thus supporting the Level 3 at 19 target.

### **2.16 Priority 4: Tracking and Data Sharing**

Thurrock uses the tracking system commissioned from Essex County Council. This provides up to date information around destinations of young people and provides data that enables us to secure and identify provision for Thurrock young people. Data sharing has progressed with robust agreements in place with schools and colleges; we are currently in the process of working with our colleagues from Job Centre Plus to enable us to gain a greater understanding of destinations of our 19 year olds to enable us to work with local employers to identify potential job opportunities. Every educational establishment in Thurrock is asked to join the Thurrock Trust Charter to ease the data sharing process. The number of Unknowns in Thurrock is steadily falling year on year, thus leading to greater engagement with vulnerable groups within Thurrock. As at the end of October 2013 the percentage of young people whose current position is unknown is 5.9% compared with 16.1% at the end of October 2012. The service is making direct contact with each of the 160 young people to confirm their position and take action where necessary.

### **2.17 Priority 5: Mix and Balance of Provision**

Over the last three years Thurrock has seen significant change in its post-16 landscape with the emergence of a number of school 6<sup>th</sup> forms. The 11-19 Strategy Group has overseen the development of a range of different offers, an example of this is a successful Foundation Learning programme which is currently delivered by three of our local schools, utilising the skills and expertise of different schools to deliver different aspects of the curriculum offer.

A key aspect of the work is ensuring that we have a range of provision at Post-16 including higher level qualifications and we are currently working with South Essex College to ensure that a range of provision is available in the new campus.

Thurrock has recently launched a Supported Internship programme for young people with additional needs. This will provide work experience opportunities and where possible, progression into work. This programme is expanding across the Council and involves taking on local young people.

## **2.18 Priority 6: Prepare for Local Jobs**

Thurrock Council's Employer Engagement Strategy sets out framework of activities to support employers to create work experience placements and apprenticeship opportunities in two key priority sectors each quarter (Two priority sectors were taken for each of the first three quarters of the year and in the fourth quarter the remaining sector and an evaluation report is made). Internal and external targets set. Materials have been produced to promote Apprenticeships to Young People, parents and employers. The documents are used in schools, Academies, colleges and by numerous partners.

An effective model, designed in Thurrock, to support employers is being used by partners in Southend and Basildon: a Thames Gateway programme to generate 200 additional 16-18 year old apprenticeships by end February 2014. At the mid point there has been 110 starts that have been reported/funded by the National Apprenticeship Service. Based on early success of this programme, Thurrock Council has been invited to tender an application to provide Employability Support to 16-18 year olds to secure an Apprenticeship using the Apprenticeship Vacancy System. If successful, Thurrock will lead activities in Southend and Basildon. Currently vulnerable young people are supported in small groups or on a one to one basis, in customising their CV, preparing job applications, preparing for interview etc (Diversity in Apprenticeship programme). If the application is successful, this work will extend to young people whose destinations have changed since leaving full time education. Partnerships with local community groups provide the same services to 19+ residents.

Working in partnership, Thurrock Council has launched three traineeships, since August 2013: logistics, childcare, health and social care. Traineeships are employer led programmes that provide sector specific employability skills and regular work experience over 10-12 weeks. A high profile example of a successful traineeship in Thurrock is with the Port of Tilbury

who have created 11 apprenticeships and have just completed assessments for a third cohort.

Thurrock is one (of two UK) partners in a European funded programme which provides an effective framework and learning exchanges to create a sustainable approach to youth employment.

Longer term, Big Lottery funding has been secured across the South East LEP to provide support to vulnerable 18-24 yr olds to enable sustained employment. Delivery anticipated from May 2014. Representatives from both Learning and Skills and Regeneration Teams at Thurrock Council, are working on the strategic content of a Skills Plan to secure European funding from 2014-2021. The deadline for applications is mid Jan and mid Mar 14.

### **3. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

- 3.1 The RPA plan is being driven by a partnership of school, further education and business and involves regular consultation with partners.

### **4. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT**

- 4.1 This report relates to the council priority to improve the education and skills of local people.

### **5. IMPLICATIONS**

#### **5.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**  
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The Programme costs for provision at Schools and Colleges, would be met through central Government funding. Thurrock may however be required to meet any additional costs to support pupils accessing provision that require high levels of additional support for Special Educational Needs, which is funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant.

#### **5.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lucinda Bell**  
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The Education and Skills Act 2008 imposes the new duties on the authority that are the subject of this report. In addition, there is statutory guidance to

which the Authority must have regard when exercising its functions in relation to the participation of young people in education or training.

### 5.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Samson DeAlyn**  
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The priority for delivery of this plan is ensuring that the numbers of young people who are not in education employment or training is minimised. Particular groups are more likely to be at risk of becoming NEET and this is being addressed through programmes aimed at supporting vulnerable groups.

## 6. RISKS

RPA is a statutory duty and non delivery would have a negative impact on the council.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The RPA plan as set out in the appendix is being delivered as set out and within available resources. The delivery partnership is strength. The offer for young people is being further developed in terms of apprenticeships and traineeships. Employers including the council are showing commitment to a range of pathways for young people into employment with training. There is now a priority to support those young people who still have no offer and/or who are NEET or at risk of becoming so.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT:**

None.

### **APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:**

- Raising of the Participation Age Plan – refreshed October 2013

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