

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 7 NOVEMBER 2006**

#### **MORE CHOICES, MORE CHANCES: A STRATEGY TO REDUCE THE PROPORTION OF YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING IN SCOTLAND**

##### **Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services**

#### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1** To inform Committee of current developments and provision for young people in the NEET group and to seek approval for a strategy in order to address the needs of this population.

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** In June 2006 the Scottish Executive launched “More Choices, More Changes: A Strategy to Reduce the Proportion of Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in Scotland”. Over the next two years funding will be made available to support local authorities to address a 39 point action plan contained within the report, a copy of which is available in the Members Information Point.
- 2.2** Seven local authorities (Clackmannanshire, Dundee, East Ayrshire, Glasgow, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire and West Dunbartonshire) where NEET is a particular challenge will receive £400,000 in 2006/07 and in 2007/08. Every other local authority area will receive £75,000 in each of these years.
- 2.3** In relation to leaver destinations ie. the proportion of young people not entering education, training or employment on leaving school, East Ayrshire has the third highest level recorded of the 29 local authorities with reliable data. In terms of benefit claims 9.3% of the 18-24 population in East Ayrshire were claiming benefit in 2005. This is significantly higher than the Scottish and British averages; 5.4% and 4.6% respectively. While the percentages proceeding from East Ayrshire schools to further education, higher education and training are at or above the national average, the percentage going into employment is particularly low. Members will recall that in earlier reports to the Education Committee on Leavers Destinations there has been a general rise over the years in the number of young people from this authority area entering education and training.
- 2.4** It is expected that local authorities will take the lead role in putting in place a strategy to reduce the risk of young people heading towards NEET (pre-16) and to assist those in the NEET group (16 to19) to achieve a positive outcome.
- 2.5** The NEET group represents a wide range of individuals, from those with multiple barriers to employment to those who are simply on a gap year. The

NEET group, and the challenges facing individuals within that group, can be broken down as follows:

- The hardest to help young people with complex, clearly defined needs which require intensive levels of support;
- An 'intermediate' group of young people who may be quietly disaffected and who often have difficulties with motivation, confidence and 'soft' skills. Less intensive, appropriately tailored support and interventions could make a massive difference to their outcomes on leaving school.
- The transition/gap year group which includes young people taking time out before progressing to a further or higher education opportunity, or to voluntary or part-time work.

**2.6** Meeting the NEET challenge means providing the intensive support required by the hardest to help young people, but it also means providing appropriate support and opportunities for those who are disengaging from school. An integrated approach is therefore required involving a range of community planning partners such as Educational and Social Services, Careers Scotland, Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire, Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry, local employers, Health Services, Ayr College and Kilmarnock Colleges, Economic Development Services all involved to develop a NEET strategy which addresses the needs and aspirations of these young people.

### **3. PRESENT PROVISION**

**3.1** Approaches to making provision for the NEET group of young people in East Ayrshire have involved integrated working for a number of years amongst schools, Community Learning and Development, Careers Scotland, local employers, Economic Development, FE Colleges, Social Work, Health Services and Police and Fire Services. This extensive partnership has produced a range of support and services.

**3.2** The need to prepare all young people for the world of work is central to the Executive's Enterprise in Education Strategy. Good progress has been made in developing enterprise and employability skills for young people in East Ayrshire.

**3.3** A range of vocational learning opportunities have been made available to students in East Ayrshire. These have been delivered through the Schools for Ambition programme, 20:20 Vision and through the general application of XL programmes throughout the secondary education sector. Particular work has been done in Youth Strategy and the involvement of Rathbone CI is being particularly successful.

**3.4** Raising educational attainment is a key priority for the Department of Educational and Social Services. Amongst this work the raising of attainment has been a frequent subject of reports to Committee.

**3.5** Additionally, a wide range of other activities designed to increase engagement with Education has been in evidence for some years. These have included;

provision of breakfast clubs, supported study initiatives, adult literacy and numeracy, use of outdoor learning, the Creative Minds programme, involvement in Psychological Services at transition stages, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, enhanced careers guidance, early intervention, and a range of other strategies.

- 3.6** At post 16 provision includes a range of vocational and further education opportunities particularly linked to the provision of Kilmarnock College and Ayr College. The EASY Project is organised through the Department of Corporate Support and other initiatives such as Working with Families are all designed to increase access to the local labour market. Careers Scotland delivers a range of provision targeting young people in the 16 – 19 age group including supported employment. There is also involvement from Job Centre Plus which supports young people between the ages of 18 and 19 who have been unemployed for six months.
- 3.7** It also is the case that the Community Plan within East Ayrshire has a particular focus which will support the NEET group. The various themes that are relevant here are the promoting community learning theme, improving opportunities and the eliminating poverty theme. It is envisaged that any strategy will be developed within this general community planning framework.

#### **4. PROPOSALS**

- 4.1** The Scottish Executive has advised that local authorities should work with an existing partnership structure in order to deliver a comprehensive and co-ordinated local response to NEET in the wider employability agenda. It is proposed therefore that community planning should form a general background to the promotion of the NEET initiative. However, the particular focus requirements of this project and the need to ensure that resources are targeted on this specific group require that specific action and activity is necessary guided by a group formed for that purpose. It is therefore proposed that a strategy group will be formed chaired by the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services and involving the Department of Development and Property Services, Careers Scotland, Job Centre Plus, the FE Colleges, the East Ayrshire Community Planning unit and Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire. Within educational services, Psychological Services, Quality Improvement and the schools services will be specifically represented in activity.
- 4.2** This group will ensure that links are made to community planning, but also to the existing network of strands and strategies that exist to support the NEET group.
- 4.3** The tracking of young people and particularly therefore the involvement of and strengthen of links with Careers Scotland will be vital.
- 4.4** All of this activity will be directed to a target of securing 0% of children and young people entering the NEET category.

**4.5** Regular meetings will be convened with the Scottish Executive staff who have responsibility for this area of provision together with Learning and Teaching Scotland and representatives of the Smith Group. A meeting has already taken place involving the Chief Executive of East Ayrshire Council with influential members of this group.

## **5. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

**5.1** The development of this strategy will be central to the development of the aims of Community Planning.

## **6. POLICY AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**6.1** Nil at this stage.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**7.1** The Scottish Executive have made funding available to support local authorities to put these plans in place. The level of funding is £400,000 over in 2006/2007 and a further £400,000 in 2007/08. This funding has been confirmed in a letter from the Scottish Executive dated 20 October 2006.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**8.1** It is recommended that Members:

- (i) Request the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services and the Executive Director of Development and Property Services to submit future reports on the specific actions and achievement of targets in relation to the overall approach to reduce the NEETs group;
- (ii) to agree that the strategy is developed within the overall framework of Community Planning;
- (iii) Approve the formation of a strategy group as outlined in this report to guide these developments; and
- (iv) Otherwise note the contents of this report

Graham Short  
Executive Director of Educational & Social Services

GS/JBS  
4 October 2006

Members requiring further information should contact Graham Short, Executive Director of Educational and Social Services (01563-576017).

### **List of Background Papers**

“More Choices, More Chances”, Scottish Executive, 2006  
Letter from Scottish Executive dated 20 October 2006 “Funding for, More Choices, More Chances”, etc

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