

REPORT TO: Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 19th January 2026

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director of Children's Services

PORTFOLIO: Children, Young People & Families

SUBJECT: Number of young people who are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) and Youth Guarantee Trailblazer

WARDS: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To report the Annual NEET and Not Known figures for Halton and provide an update on the Youth Guarantee Trailblazer outcomes.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That

- 1) the report be noted;**
- 2) information about the current situation in January 2026 be tabled at the meeting.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Education and Skills Act 2008 placed two Raising Participation Age related duties on local authorities regarding academic age 16- & 17-year-olds:
- Local authorities must promote the effective participation in education and training of 16- & 17-year-olds in their area with a view to ensuring that those persons fulfil the duty to participate in education or training.
 - Local authorities must make arrangements – that is, maintain a tracking system – to identify 16- & 17-year-olds who are not participating in education or training.
- 3.2 The 16+ Education to Employment (E2E) Team in Halton work to fulfil these two duties by tracking the participation of all academic age 16- & 17-year-olds who are resident in Halton. In addition, young people between 18 – 25 years old with a maintained Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP) are tracked. The 16+E2E Team provide Careers Guidance and support to those who are not participating, and work with schools to support young people to transition from Year 11 into Post 16 education.

- 3.3 As part of the statutory duties the Department for Education (DfE) require every local authority to report monthly on the participation of academic age 16- & 17-year-olds, and those up to 25 with a maintained EHCP.
- 3.4 The DfE collate the data provided by local authorities and publish an annual measure of the percentage of young people who are NEET or whose activity is Not Known to the local authority. This percentage is an average of the figures across December, January and February annually. The figure is for academic age 16- & 17-year-olds who live in Halton. It does not include children in the care of Halton who live out of borough or those with a maintained EHCP older than academic age 17. It does include children in the care of other local authorities but live in Halton.
- 3.5 After years of NEET and Not Know figures decreasing in Halton, and being significantly lower than other areas, the number of young people who are NEET has risen. The increase is significantly greater in Halton than in other local authorities.

Figure 1: Annual 3-month average combined NEET and Not Known results:

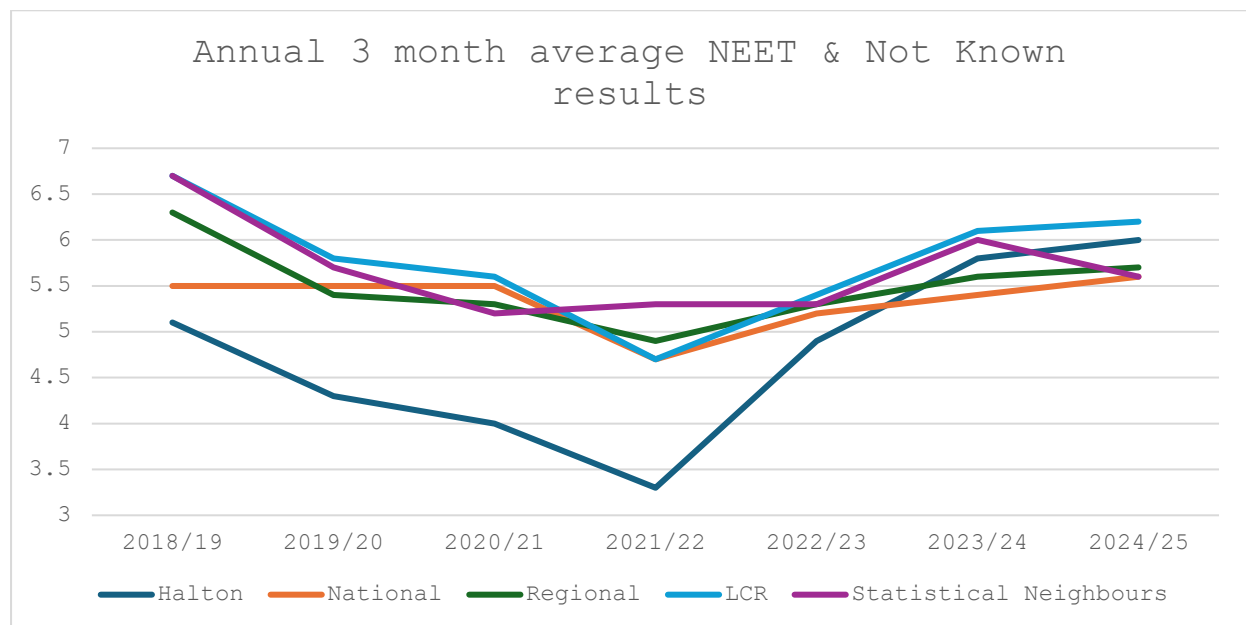


Table 1: Annual 3-month average combined NEET and Not Known percentages

	Halton	National	Regional	LCR	Statistical Neighbours
2018/19	5.1%	5.5%	6.3%	6.7%	6.7%
2019/20	4.3%	5.5%	5.4%	5.8%	5.7%
2020/21	4%	5.5%	5.3%	5.6%	5.2%
2021/22 (SN changes applied)	3.3% (= 106 young people)	4.7%	4.9%	4.7%	5.3%
2022/23	4.9%	5.2%	5.3%	5.4%	5.3%
2023/24	5.8%	5.4%	5.6%	6.1%	6%
2024/25	6% (=210 young people)	5.6%	5.7%	6.2%	5.6%

3.6 Not Known Figures - For those whose activity is Not Known to the local authority Halton has consistently performed well in this measure as we have a strong tracking process and good relationships with others to share information. In 2024/25 the Not Known figure for Halton is 0.3% (10 young people) compared to 2.2% Nationally and 1.4% Regionally.

3.7 Halton's figure of 0.3% Not Known for 2024/25 is the same as it was in 2021/22. Therefore, the increase in the overall 3-month average combined NEET and Not Known percentage all comes from an increase in the number of young people who are NEET.

3.8 Three key reasons NEET figures have been rising are:

3.8.1 Less young people returning to their studies after the end of one academic year and the start of the next academic year. Table 2 illustrates the reduction in the number of young people who secured an offer of learning or training in September 2025 compared to September 2022.

Table 2: September Guarantee percentages comparison

September Guarantee	Year 11	Year 12
2025	97.4%	90.7%
2022	97.7%	94.3%

3.8.2 More young people leaving education, employment or training part way through an academic year. Table 3 illustrates the growth in the number of young people who become NEET during an academic year.

Table 3: NEET Joiners and Leavers comparison

	Joining NEET cohort	Leaving NEET cohort	Difference
2019/20	233	166	67
2024/25	382	227	155

- 3.8.3 Lack of Post 16 provision in Halton, especially provision that allows learners to join part way through an academic year is also resulting in an increase in NEET figures as there are limited opportunities for young people to access education or training.
- 3.9 Post 16 funding is paid directly to providers from the Department for Education (DfE) and works on a lagged learner model, with a cut off point in November annually. For example, a provider who allows a learner to join a course in January 2025 may not to receive funding for that learner until September 2026.
- 3.10 Providers reference this DfE funding methodology as the main reason why they are unable to offer provision opportunities part way through an academic year.
- 3.11 Whilst two new Post 16 providers started deliver in Halton in 2024/25 one provider has since left the borough due to the DfE funding methodology reducing their allocation for 2025/26.
- 3.12 A Post 16 Gap Application was submitted to DfE to bring a new provider into the borough for 2026.
- 3.13 In December 2025 the DfE confirmed there is a gap in provision in Halton. DfE stated that due to affordability challenges they were unable to provide additional funding to meet the provision gap.
- 3.14 Work is taking place with the current provider base in Halton to review the transition and retention of young people in education and training.
- 3.15 For young people who are 18 years or older and looking for employment support is being accessed from the Youth Guarantee Trailblazer.
- 3.16 The Youth Guarantee Trailblazer (YGT) is aimed at supporting care leavers and young people aged 18-21 who are NEET. There are 8 UK Youth Guarantee Trailblazers being piloted nationally. The YGT areas are: Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, East Midlands, Liverpool City Region, Tees Valley, West Midlands, West of England, and two in London.

- 3.17 YGT was launched in Halton on the 9th of September 2025. It is delivered by HBC's Employment, Learning and Skills Division (jointly delivered by Halton People into Jobs and Halton Adult Learning) and in close collaboration with the 16+ Education to Employment Team and the Young People's Pathway Teams. This collaboration working effectively will be key to maximising the support available for young people.
- 3.18 Year 1 of the programme is contracted to run from September 2025 – March 2026. Funding for subsequent years may be available.
- 3.19 Table 4 shows the four separate funding streams within the YGT:

Table 4 Youth Guarantee Trailblazer funding streams

1.1	Support for care leavers and care experienced young people aged 18-21.
1.2	Tracking young people aged 18 and 19 not in Employment, Education and/or Training (NEET)
1.3	Employment and Employability Support for young people aged 18-21 (NEET)
1.4	Employer engagement and incentives for recruiting young people aged 18-21 (NEET or care leavers)

- 3.20 The aim of the YGT is to try new and innovative approaches to engage with NEET young people and/or care leavers. Funding can be used more flexibly to help remove barriers that are impacting on young people accessing training, employment or self-employment.
- 3.21 All referrals to the YGT are triaged through Halton People into Jobs. Employment Specialists provide a tailored programme of practical support and signpost to appropriate services where specialist advice is needed e.g. housing, debt, mental health etc. This wrap around support is provided throughout their time on the programme and continues when they move into work to ensure they have the best chances of sustaining employment.
- 3.22 Halton Adult Learning, funded by devolved Adult Skills Budget, offers a range of programmes to support Halton residents aged 19+ (due to specific funding criteria). YGT can provide opportunities for young people to upskill and to engage in activities and interventions for young people that are aged eighteen who would not ordinarily be able to access these services through Adult Learning.
- 3.23 Effective employer engagement is a key element of the YGT. Sourcing employers who can provide paid opportunities that young people want is vital. Financial incentives of £3,000 can be offered to employers who are recruiting a young person that is eligible and has signed up to the YGT.
- 3.24 Up to October 2025 nine young people have been supported into paid employment and three employers have received a financial incentive for

employing a young person. Updated figures will be provided up to December 2025 at the meeting.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no policy implications of pursuing the recommended course of action.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Youth Guarantee Trailblazer is externally funded by DWP via the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. A Grant Funding Agreement is in place between the LCRCA and Halton Borough Council.
- 5.2 Income and expenditure are closely monitored through a combination of internal and external mechanisms, to ensure that contracts are delivered efficiently.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

Supporting young people to make a positive and sustained transition into Post 16 education or training allows them to continue their journey to gain the skills and abilities needed for long term employment. Employment is a route to independence and choices as an adult.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

Supporting young people to make a positive and sustained transition into Post 16 education or training allows them to continue their journey to gain the skills and abilities needed for long term employment. This creates the next generation of local workforce to meet the skills needs of our local economy.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

Supporting young people to make a positive and sustained transition into Post 16 education or training, and continue into employment is integral to ensuring they reach their full potential.

6.4 *Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most in Need*

Social and economic factors show Halton young people to be at higher risk of NEET. These risk factors can be mitigated against with the right level of support to transition into and sustain Post 16 education or training, and through the Youth Guarantee Trailblazer offer.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

None.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

The Youth Guarantee Trailblazer supports young people aged 18-21 (some with SEND) to access opportunities and support in the community. Placements can be offered in community venues such as Halton Adult Learning to add value to the community.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Opportunities associated with the proposed actions are:

7.1.1 Raise awareness of the provision landscape in Halton and the opportunities for young people through the Youth Guarantee Trailblazer.

7.2 The risks associated with not taking the proposed actions are:

7.2.1 Lack of understanding of the experience of Post 16 providers, and young people in the borough.

7.2.2 Lack of referrals to the Youth Guarantee Trailblazer meaning the resource available not being used fully, and potential that future funding would be reduced as a result.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 Supporting young people who are NEET gives those most at risk of not being financially independent the opportunity to re-engage in education or training and progress towards sustained, long term employment.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There is no effect on the environment.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Participation of young people in education, employment or training – statutory guidance for local authorities April 2024	Participation of young people: education, employment and training - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)	Hâf Bell