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Preface

Darlington Borough Council (DBC) would like to formally thank Sweeney Associates for writing a report that brings together the views of various stakeholders, with local information and data on young people 14–19 in Darlington. The report combines local information with that of national expectations and current thinking regarding the engagement of young people in learning.

Funding through the Local Area Agreement enabled Sweeney Associates to be appointed.

Sir George Sweeney has 40 years' experience of working in the further education sector. He was Principal of Knowsley Community College in Merseyside, which was designated a Beacon College by the FEFC and also LSC. George has extensive experience of policy work at local, regional and national levels, for example as Director of Merseyside Training and Enterprise Council (MTEC), Director of Careerdecisions (the Merseyside Careers Company), National Council Member of LSC, and Member of Greater Merseyside LSC. George has taken a leading role in several major initiatives in the sector.

Mick Farley has extensive and senior experience of working in schools, colleges and universities. He was Deputy Chief Executive of Merseyside TEC and Chief Executive of Careerdecisions Ltd before moving to Cumbria as the Executive Director of LSC Cumbria, and is now Chair of Connexions Cumbria Ltd. As UCLan's Director for Cumbria he handled the development of the new University of Cumbria and is the University's lead in the development of the school academy in North Copeland (West Cumbria). He is a founder Director of Sweeney Associates Ltd.

Pamela R. Lunt was Vice Principal – Operations of Knowsley Community College, where she managed all vocational education and employer engagement. Pamela introduced Enterprise into the curriculum, set up college enterprise units and managed one of the largest work-based learning contracts in the country, increasing the number of apprenticeships and apprentices achieving full frameworks. Pamela was also on the board of the Knowsley Chamber of Commerce and a member of the Knowsley Economic Forum.

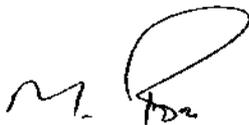
The development of this strategy was informed by major desk research and interviews with some 30 individuals from a variety of organisations and DBC staff. The Local Authority would therefore also like to take this opportunity to formally thank its own staff as well as the external organisations and young people who co-operated with the fieldwork.

The results of the desk research and a summary of the interviews are set out in a separate document which supports the strategy, available from the 14–19 Team, Darlington Borough Council, Town Hall, Feethams, Darlington, DL1 5QT – Tel: 01325 388886.

Foreword: Why do we need a NEET Strategy?

It is important that every young person is able to access appropriate provision after they leave school or college. This is recognised by national government, by local government, by employers and by communities. It is in everyone's short-term and long-term interests that young people are equipped with the skills they need to become successful adults who can make informed choices about how they live their lives. We have agreed that this successful transition into education, training or employment should be a local strategic priority and we have set ourselves ambitious targets to reduce the NEET figures.

It is recognised that young people who do not make successful transitions at 16, 17 or 18 years of age may well require the support of a range of partners and agencies to help them get back on track or to get a positive outcome. There is already an established NEET Reduction Partnership in Darlington, which brings agencies and services together to support the reduction in the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training. The Partnership has already been successful, and we hope that this strategy will help to deliver even further reductions in the NEET numbers.



Murray Rose
Director of Children's Services

Aspiring Darlington

Central government and local government recognise that despite more young people achieving GCSE's A-C and big improvements in individual schools and colleges, not enough young people feel engaged by the education on offer. Despite an increase in the number of young people progressing into further learning in our colleges and training provision, too many are dropping out of education and training before the age of 18.

Nationally, government believes that a good education and improving people's skills provides for better opportunities for young people. Locally, we believe that success in learning requires us all to raise the expectations and aspirations that we have for our young people and that they have for themselves.

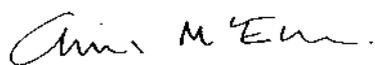
Darlington Partnership has recently published the Community Strategy One Darlington – Perfectly Placed. Children's Services staff are committed to delivering all strands of the strategy, especially the Aspiring Darlington strand. In support of the raising expectations and aspirations agenda, we wish to ensure *all* young people have a learning route and the support they need to succeed; ensuring that those most at risk of not participating are not left behind.

The recent JAR inspection confirmed our areas of greatest focus around education and training. We must:

- Ensure that there is sufficient good quality education and training for young people who offend.
- Clarify strategies and implement the actions required to engage more young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in education, employment or training post-16.
- Reduce the number of young people who are not involved in education, employment or training at age 18.
- Implement the 14–19 strategy fully and monitor its impact.

I believe that Darlington's NEET Strategy will galvanise all partners and key stakeholders in the delivery of a challenging agenda for all the young people of Darlington. Engaging young people in planning for their future is 'Everybody's Business'; everyone working face to face with young people and families, is capable of inspiring young people and making a difference to their lives.

I have agreed to be the Cabinet's NEET Champion and accept my responsibility to ensure young people access the services they need to succeed.



Councillor Chris McEwan
Cabinet Member with Portfolio for Children and Young People

NEET Reduction: Everybody's Business – Everybody's Contribution

A strategy to engage young people in learning or employment

Introduction

Darlington's Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) provides a single overarching strategy for the further development and co-ordination of all local services for children and young people in the Borough. It has been prepared in partnership with all key stakeholders in accordance with the statutory duty placed on local authorities by The Children Act 2004. Reducing the proportion of young people **not in education, employment or training (NEET)** is amongst the top priorities identified for the Borough. The Borough's Local Area Agreement (LAA) focuses on children and young people, and NEET reduction is a key part of the CYPP action plan.

This emphasis on reducing the number of young people who are NEET in Darlington is consistent with government policy set out in a number of documents, most recently in ***The Children's Plan – Building Brighter Futures***, which brings together at a national level all policy related to the years 0–19. In particular, reducing the percentage of 16–18-year-olds who are NEET is a key indicator in the Government's Public Service Agreement (PSA).

The impact of NEETs

The importance of reducing the NEET rate is evidenced in two key studies.

The first, a York University study in 2003 exposed the financial cost to the nation:

- £7 billion not being generated in taxes or wage spending
- £8 billion spent on benefits and health costs
- £97,000 – the cost to an individual in lost wages

The second, by the Social Exclusion Unit of the British Birth Cohort Study, shows that being NEET for six months is likely to mean that by the age of 21 someone is:

- More than four times more likely to be out of work
- Three times more likely to have depression or mental health issues
- Five times more likely to have a criminal record
- Six times less likely to have qualifications

Data from the Learning and Skills Council show also that young people who are in the NEET group are:

- 60% more likely to become a substance mis-user
- Young women are 22% more likely to become teenage mothers

These factors not only present the economic cost of NEET but also present a vivid picture of damaged lives and unfulfilled potential.

The Government has asked local authorities to take the lead on reducing the number of young people who are NEET. Darlington's LAA has adopted this as one of its PSA targets, namely to reduce the number of young people who are NEET from 7.5% now to 5.7% of the relevant cohort by 2010.

Early in 2007, the government sent a letter to all key agencies reminding them of the importance of tackling the NEET issue and emphasising the absolute need for a partnership response to the matter.

Why reducing the proportion of young people who are NEET is important to Darlington

Being NEET is an enormous waste of young people's potential and of their contribution to their community and to the economy. All the evidence shows that non-participation in education, employment or training is a major predictor of later unemployment, low income and mental health issues.

Reducing the number of young people who are NEET is about making sure that all young people have the skills and qualifications as well as the personal qualities, resilience and attitudes they need to thrive in the rapidly changing, global economy of the 21st century.

Young people who participate in education, employment or training are less likely to behave anti-socially, be involved in crime, or experience teenage pregnancy. They are more likely to be healthy and develop good social skills.

Successfully tackling the NEET issue in Darlington is a priority to prevent the continuation of disadvantage through to adulthood; to support local economic competitiveness; and to achieve social inclusion. Tackling the issue is a valuable investment for individual young people, ensuring that they are more likely to be employed and to get jobs paying higher salaries. Failure to tackle the issue will weaken the Borough's economy and lead to social problems.

What is meant by NEET?

Whilst NEET commonly conjures up images of the long-term unemployed (core NEET), it also refers to those who drift in and out employment and/or education and/or training (floating NEET/NEET 'churn'), and to those who take 'time out' after completing compulsory education (transition/gap NEET). There are also a number of significant equality issues to be considered along the lines of disability, gender and ethnicity.

For statistical purposes the government also takes a proportion from the 'situation not known' figure and assumes that these are NEET

Definition of NEET

NEET includes all 16–18-year-olds who are not in any form of employment, education or training. Included are the following:

- Young people who are assessed as 'not yet ready' to enter any form of work or learning, falling below the level needed to progress onto Entry to Employment (E2E) – typically this would be because of basic skills difficulties or behavioural issues
- Young people taking part in a personal development opportunity (PDO), such as the Prince's Trust, Millennium Volunteers or local provision, to help prepare them for learning
- Those waiting for an appropriate place in learning
- Those who have a start date but have not yet started
- Those who are unavailable for EET because they are young carers, teenage parents, in the later stages of pregnancy, suffering from continuing ill health, not available on religious grounds, unlikely ever to be economically active.

Definition of 'Situation Not Known'

This figure is an additional target and reporting requirement. Those in a 'situation not known' are those for whom, despite best efforts, it has not been possible to determine what they are doing in relation to EET or NEET activity or inactivity.

Since 2003, the Government has established guidelines for maintaining contact with young people whatever their post-16 destination, to verify that they are still EET or NEET. This guidance is commonly described as the 'currency rule', which states that, if a young person's situation cannot be established within the timescales required, the validity of the destination lapses and the young person is taken to be 'situation not known'.

In basic terms a formula is calculated that places a percentage of young people who are classified as 'situation not known' in the overall NEET group – referred to as 'adjusted NEET'. The importance of 'situation not known' is further emphasised by the Government requiring the figure to be below 5%.

Where is Darlington now (as at 1 March 2008)?

Darlington's NEET figure at 7.5%, representing 347 young people, appears to compare well with Tees Valley's 9.9% and the North East's 10%, but it is higher than the England average figure of 6.7%. However, there were a significant number of young people – 289 (6.1%) – whose activities are 'not known'. This is double the number in the previous year (2007), when it was 3%, and worse than Tees Valley at 5%, the North East at 5.2%, and the England average of 4.2%.

Darlington – a snapshot

Population of young people

In January 2008, according to the Darlington Locality Profile, the Borough had 5,050 young people (5.08% of the total population) aged 16–19.

Deprivation

The Borough is the 96th most deprived (out of 354) in England. Seven of the Borough's 24 wards were within the 10% most deprived wards in the country as indicated in Indices of Deprivation. Whilst the Borough does not qualify for Working Neighbourhood Funding, the Darlington Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy aims to reduce deprivation in the 11 most disadvantaged wards, namely, Central, Cockerton West, Banktop, Eastbourne, Lascelles, Park East, Northgate, Haughton East, North Road, Lingfield and Cockerton East.

Unemployment

Although still above the national average of 2.6%, Darlington has the lowest unemployment rate (3.2%) in the Tees Valley (4.2%). A number of wards have a rate of unemployment above the Borough average – Central, Northgate, Park East, Eastbourne, Lascelles, Cockerton West, and Haughton East.

Skill base

Although there is a much reduced manufacturing sector, accounting for just over 12% of jobs in the Borough, this sector is still slightly more important in Darlington than it is nationally. It is heavily reliant on public sector jobs – 32.5% of jobs are in public administration, education and health. Business services such as finance and IT are much underrepresented. Traditionally there has been a weak entrepreneurial culture, although the Borough currently has a slightly higher rate of business start-ups than the national average.

Education

Whilst education performance has improved over recent years, Darlington remains below national averages for GCSE attainment with marked differences at ward (and school) level. Cockerton West and Park East are the worst ranked wards, and Eastbourne School performs the least well, with Hurworth School the best performer. Haughton Community School falls into the bottom 5% of schools in England when contextual value added scores from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 are compared.

Participation

In common with England as a whole, in recent years Darlington has increased the number of young people in education and training post-16. The proportion of school leavers in learning has risen from 80.5% in 2003 to 90.5% in 2007. School leaver destination data for 2007 are as follows:

2007 Annual Activity	Total	In Learning	FT Education	WBL Not Employed	Employed With Training	Employed No Training	Not Settled PT Learning or PDOs	Not Settled NEET Available	Not Settled NEET Not Available	Moved	No Response
D'ton	1,365	1,235 90.5%	1,072 78.5%	92 6.7%	71 5.2%	31 2.3%	8 0.6%	55 4%	12 0.9%	6 0.4%	18 1.3%
Tees Valley	9,454	8,411 89%	7,190 76.1%	570 6%	651 6.9%	99 1%	104 1.1%	556 5.9%	89 1%	77 0.8%	118 1.2%

Vulnerable groups

Absences and exclusions from school

Over the last eighteen months, there has been an improvement in pupil attendance. In 2007, the level of absence was 8.4% – still above the England average – but a significant improvement over the 2006 figure of 9.9%, when Darlington was ranked 12th worst borough in the country for pupil absence, many of which were unauthorised. There was also a relatively high number of exclusions, both permanent and fixed term – the percentage of the former was over two-and-half times the national average, whilst the latter at 24.03% was over twice the national average of 10.4%.

Teenage parents

The number of conceptions to young women under 18 per 1,000 females aged 15–17 in 1998 was 66 per 1,000. By 2007 this had reduced by over one-third as a result of the Borough's proactive policy. As at September 2007, 12% of teenage mothers were in EET; 24% were 'not known'. For Tees Valley the comparable percentages were 19% and 24%; for the North East, 19% and 27%; and for England, 24% and 26%.

Young offenders

In the last quarter of 2006, there were 51 new entrants to the youth justice system in Darlington. The 2003 cohort of young offenders had a re-offending rate of 53.5%, higher than the national average rate of 49.7%. The 2007/08 Youth Justice Plan provides a thorough analysis of the up-to-date position

Anti-social behaviour

In 2000, Durham University conducted a research study of anti-social behaviour in Darlington, concluding that there were then 613 children with a diagnosable conduct disorder and that 47.4% of these were concentrated in six wards.

Children looked after

In September 2006 there were 110 children in Darlington who had been looked after for at least twelve months, of whom 80 were of school age. Although numbers are relatively small, local data for Darlington suggest that the performance at GCSE level of children looked after has declined over the period 2004/05 to 2006/07. The latest figures available (September 2007) show that 38% of 19-year-old care leavers were in EET against Tees Valley's 41%, the North East's 37%, and the England average of 44%.

Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

At January 2007, 2% of children and young people from the age of 0–19 years had a statement of special educational need compared with 1.91% nationally. There has been a downward trend generally except in respect of behaviour, social and emotional difficulties, where the number of statements has increased (in line with national trends) to 98. Such young people are more likely than most to be excluded from school or to have poor attendance and need substantial support at transition points. There are around 250 young people aged 16–19 in the Borough with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Of these (September 2007) 17.4% were NEET, against Tees Valley's 23.1%, the North East's 17.3%, and the England average of 11.9%

Issues in Darlington

A number of common concerns were voiced during the interviews.

First, relating to information and tracking – many felt that data management, data capture and exchange need to be improved. Roles and responsibilities are not clear, and there are issues about the sharing of information. There are also concerns that tracking is not good and over the loss of contact with the very young people who need help. There does not appear to be a great deal of understanding of the data available; and no 'ownership'.

Second, relating to multi-agency working – many felt that agencies need to work together more cohesively and proactively to make a difference to individual young people 'at risk'. There was a strong view that relationships between schools and other agencies could be improved.

Third, concerns were expressed about the number of exclusions from school. There was a feeling that there should be clear protocols for supporting young people who are in danger of exclusion.

Fourth, relating to curriculum – whilst there were good examples of successful curriculum initiatives, dissatisfaction was voiced about the range of the curriculum offered at foundation level, and the perception is that there is insufficient availability of 'roll-on, roll-off' programmes.

Fifth, there was a clear view that young people should be consulted on a systematic and regular basis and that they should be involved in curriculum design. Alongside this, young people need to be contacted directly rather than relying on writing to them. In addition, parental involvement needs to be improved.

Sixth, specific concerns were expressed about the perceived number of young people with mental health problems, and an accompanying suggestion that insufficient support is available to them.

Seventh, relating to information, advice and guidance (IAG) – concerns were expressed about the number of young people whose situation is not known and that young people aged 17 and over are not receiving IAG.

National NEET Strategy

In November 2007 the government set out plans to legislate in an Education and Skills Bill to introduce a requirement for all young people to participate in learning until the end of the academic year in which they are 17 from 2013 and until their 18th birthday from 2015. Alongside this the government published a strategy to reduce the number of young people who are NEET. There are three key elements, each of which is relevant at the Darlington Borough level. These are:

- Careful tracking of young people
- A flexible mix of learning provision
- Good advice and support

The strategy adds a further component, namely

- A new emphasis on rights and responsibilities, so that all young people who have been NEET for at least 26 weeks by the time they reach their 18th birthday are fast-tracked to the intensive support and sanctions regime of New Deal.

In addition, the government announced:

- The extension of the September Guarantee to cover 17-year-olds as well as 16-year-olds
- The extension of Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) so that young people on a wider range of courses can receive support, and so that all those on Entry to Employment (E2E) can receive an EMA

A NEET Strategy and Action Plan for Darlington

The NEET target can only be delivered if all partners recognise its importance and are committed to being involved in and delivering a joint approach, taking collective responsibility for reducing the numbers of young people who are NEET. The Connexions service clearly has a major contribution to make in delivering the strategy and enabling targets to be met, but this requires strong and consistent leadership from the Local Authority, closer partnership working and sustained action from all key players. In particular, there needs to be:

- A shared action plan reflecting the associated responsibilities and providing clear direction
- A clear understanding of the local issues and sign up to tackling them through key priorities for both funding and action

- A framework for the sharing and use of robust and timely data to inform action and for monitoring the impact made
- Ongoing dialogue and consultation with young people, their parents and professionals

Effective prevention and early intervention is the best policy, but even then some young people will experience serious problems and become NEET.

PSA Delivery Agreement 14 sets out what this means for local authorities and local partners as well as what it means for schools, colleges, work-based learning providers, local health services, and criminal justice agencies. The Local Authority has a crucial role to play in supporting delivery partners.

Statutory guidance emphasises the importance of the Local Authority in brokering services and securing the support of other agencies where it is needed.

There are **three key areas to focus on** in order to achieve a reduction in the numbers NEET and ensure young people stay in learning; they form the basis of the structure of the self-assessment document and subsequent action plan.

They are:

- **Prevention** – stopping young people becoming NEET and/or before the end of compulsory education becoming vulnerable to falling into NEET
- **Intervention** – getting young people who are NEET back into education, employment and training
- **Retention** – preventing young people from returning to being NEET

The key priorities around the three themes for the action plan are:

- **Prevention**
 1. Tackling school absence and reducing exclusions
 2. Support for vulnerable groups and individuals
 3. Information for and to parents/carers
 4. High quality and impartial IAG, including information about financial support and the range of support services
 5. Appropriate provision
 6. Reducing the numbers of 'not knows'
 7. Workforce development
- **Intervention**
 1. Case loading of young people NEET
 2. Analysis and understanding of data for provision planning and targeting
 3. Support for vulnerable groups and individuals
 4. Agreements with individual young people NEET
- **Retention**
 1. Robust information sharing arrangements
 2. Access to quality, impartial IAG
 3. Continuous support
 4. Links with employers to ensure more employer-led training and employment opportunities

The elements underpinning the key priorities are contained in Appendix 1.

The action plan will include a review of **policies and procedures** and the agreement of a **robust reporting framework**.

Policies and procedures will be reviewed, written/rewritten and tightened, where necessary, by the Local Authority and Partners, including ones relating to:

- Partnership Agreements between the local authority/Connexions and schools, colleges, work-based learning providers, local health services, criminal justice agencies, the Learning and Skills Council and others.
- Absence and exclusions
- Recording Information

- Sharing Information
- Follow-up of young people
- Monthly management information, including Connexions Client Information System (CCIS)
- A robust reporting framework (see below)

A robust reporting framework should be agreed, based on the suggestion set out in Appendix 2, to take account of new legislation and responsibilities coming to local authorities.

14-19 Partnerships

The government is looking to strengthen 14–19 partnerships by introducing legislation about local co-operation on 14–19 education. (The current Education and Skills Bill aims to amend section 10 of the Children Act 2004, which covers children's trust arrangements, to make it explicit that local authorities should put in place co-operation arrangements with partners and providers of 14–19 education and training.)

In future, the Local Authority's responsibility for commissioning provision (set out in the White Paper ***Raising Expectations: enabling the system to deliver***) must ensure that all young people are able to access suitable learning opportunities, wherever they live and whatever their needs and interests.

The Local Authority should make explicit that the local 14–19 Partnership has the lead responsibility on meeting the NEET target. The Partnership should link to the Children's Trust and its Plan should:

- Follow joint guidance issued by the LSC and the ADSC
- Be an integral element of the Children and Young People's Plan and link into the Local Area Agreement

It should be the agreed local 14–19 Plan which, inter-alia sets out the policy for reducing the number of young people who are NEET.

The NEET Reduction Partnership should be a sub-group of the 14–19 Partnership (see Appendices 3 and 4).

The 14–19 Partnership should celebrate success, including, inter alia, improvements in partnership working to reduce the NEET figure.

In addition to the reporting framework set out in Appendix 2, the Chair of the Children's Trust should, at least quarterly, produce a comprehensive NEET report for the Corporate Management Team to consider. This report should be submitted to the Council's Cabinet for consideration and also to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel.

Immediate Actions

A complete action plan will be based on a town wide self-assessment process, but the strategy has identified the following actions as a priority focus whilst undertaking the self-assessment process:

1. Production of a complete action plan based on a town wide self-assessment process.

Responsible body: Local Authority

2. Policies and procedures must be written and agreed as a matter of urgency. These need to include:

- Recording and sharing of information
- Data input
- Data Protection
- Confidentiality
- Robust Partnership Agreements
- Monitoring quality of recorded information

Responsible body: Connexions service/Local Authority

3. The number of 'not knowns' must be reduced if necessary by using an agency to do so

Responsible body: Connexions service/Local Authority

4. School absence and exclusion policies need to be reviewed and tightened

Responsible body: Schools/ Local Authority

5. Young people identified as NEET need to be provided with appropriate intensive personal support by an agency acceptable to the with the objective of them becoming EET

Responsible body: Connexions service/providers

6. The Local Authority Cabinet should appoint a NEET Champion to provide an impetus and focus for achieving the Borough's NEET target

Responsible body: Local Authority Cabinet

7. A local manager, with adequate support and sufficient seniority, must become fully conversant with CCIS so as to own, effectively manage and understand NEET data. This manager should attend meetings of those groups involved in the reporting structures, providing each with easily understood data

Responsible body: Local Authority

8. Membership of the NEET Reduction Partnership needs to be reviewed and revitalised; its responsibilities clarified; and its relationship to the 14–19 Partnership made explicit

Responsible body: Local Authority

9. The 14–19 Partnership should take the lead on meeting the NEET target

Responsible body: Local Authority

10. Reporting structures should be reviewed and clarity established as to which groups are responsible for securing appropriate action in a given timeframe

Responsible body: Local Authority

11. The structure of the Connexions service and the qualification mix of its staff should be reviewed so that resources are deployed in an effective and efficient manner

Responsible body: Local Authority

12. Continuing workforce development needs to be planned on an inter agency basis using the Common Assessment Framework

Responsible body: Local Authority

13. Synergy between the Connexions service and the youth service must be brought about

Responsible body/person: Manager of the two services

14. Management information training – “What does this mean?” – for all members of the Connexions service and the 14–19 Partnership should be provided

Responsible person: Manager of the service

15. The Children and Young People's Consultation and Engagement Strategy should be reviewed and progressed to ensure meaningful and ongoing consultation with young people. A similar strategy should be developed and implemented in respect of their parents/carers

Responsible body: Local Authority

The Elements Underpinning the Key Priorities

Prevention

Tackling absence and reducing exclusions

- Schools need to be reminded of the Local Authority's attendance strategy and of the need to implement this in a robust fashion including half-termly data returns
- The Local Authority should establish robust monitoring arrangements for and ensure attendance and exclusion data is available to officers and shared with partners
- The Local Authority should ensure that all statutory age young people are on the roll of a school focusing on identifying those who are not captured as 'missing' and those under supervision by the criminal justice agencies.
- The Local Authority should ensure that the September Guarantee for 16- and 17-year-olds is met by following guidelines issued by the DCSF.
- The Common Assessment Framework should play a key role in delivering frontline services that are integrated and focused on the needs of the young person. The framework should be used in conducting an assessment of a young person's additional needs and in deciding how those needs should be met.
- Schools and other providers, including colleges, should identify and assess young people with problems and help them access appropriate and sustained personal support
- Schools and other providers, including colleges, should only exclude students as a last resort after a range of measures to improve the young person's behaviour have been tried and should avoid other than in the most exceptional of cases permanently excluding young people in care or those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Schools should have a robust written Behaviour Policy and be in behaviour partnerships as recommended in Sir Alan Steer's 2005 report.
- Schools and other providers, including colleges, should have effective pastoral support arrangements including a 'champion' for every young person.
- Schools and other providers, including colleges, should increase cooperation with targeted services such as substance misuse prevention programmes, etc.
- Schools and other providers, including colleges, should notify the Connexions service if a young person does not enrol for a place s/he has accepted.
- Schools and other providers, including colleges, should notify the Connexions service immediately a young person leaves learning.

- Schools should have a robust home-school policy and procedure and work with parents/carers to prevent absences.
- Colleges and other providers should liaise with schools about the care of 14–16-year-olds.

Support for vulnerable groups

- Schools, other learning providers, including colleges, should identify young people 'at risk' of becoming NEET, share this information with all relevant agencies, and ensure those young people 'at risk' get on-going individual support to remain in EET as well as securing appropriate support for their parents/carers.
- Schools should identify and track the intended destinations of Year 11 young people and share this information in a timely fashion with other providers and with the Connexions service.
- Schools and other providers, including colleges, should ensure timely information about individual young people is provided to the Connexions service for active use.
- Schools and other providers, including colleges and those in the third sector, together with the local authority and the LSC should ensure appropriate high quality provision is available for those likely to disengage.
- All learning providers should have a coherent framework for assessment of learning and support needs which is communicated to all partners.
- Schools, other learning providers, including colleges, as well as the Local Authority and the Connexions service should ensure that all young people and their parents/carers are aware of EMAs, Learner Support and Care to Learn and that they are supported through the process of applying.
- Partnership Agreements between the Connexions service and other agencies with regard to vulnerable groups should be agreed, implemented and monitored (e.g. with the YOS, Teenage Pregnancy Board) by appropriate senior managers.

Information for and to parents/carers

- The Local Authority and the Connexions service should ensure that parents/carers receive information about post-16 opportunities for young people, including relevant labour market information (LMI).
- The Local Authority and the Connexions service should ensure that parents/carers are aware of EMAs, Learner Support and Care to Learn.
- Parents/carers should be kept informed at least termly of the progress of their young people.
- Parents/carers should be informed immediately if their young person is absent from school without authorisation.

Information, advice and guidance (IAG)

- Schools together with other learning providers, including colleges, and the Local Authority should ensure an up-to-date on-line prospectus is available.
- Schools should ensure, working with the Connexions service, that high quality IAG programmes are available to all pre-16 young people and that such programmes provide up-to-date LMI.
- All providers and youth support services should achieve the IAG quality standards.
- Schools should take proper cognisance of national guidelines on work related learning at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

Appropriate provision

- Learning providers and their funders should work together to make sure that every young person has a choice of high quality provision at every level; suited to every style of learning; that is easily accessible; enables progression; and facilitates young people achieving the skills they need for life and work.
- Learning providers and their funders should ensure good level 1 and entry level provision, including Entry to Employment (E2E).
- Learning providers should keep abreast of the reform of provision below level 2 through the development of the Foundation Learning Tier (FLT).
- Available apprenticeships should be reviewed and the number and range increased.
- Learning providers should increase the flexibility of their provision to enable young people to start programmes during the course of the academic year – it is particularly important that, as a minimum, young people can start courses in January.
- Communication between the Connexions service and learning providers, and vice-versa, needs to improve so that appropriate provision can be offered and comprehensive and up-to-date information about all provision and its quality and flexibility is known and disseminated.

Reducing the numbers of 'not knowns'

- The Connexions service should use processes, including the use of outside agencies, to significantly reduce the numbers of 'not knowns'.
- Tracking should be a everybody's responsibility and not left to any one individual/organisation.

Workforce development

- The use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) should continue to be emphasised along with associated inter-agency staff training.

Intervention

Case loading of young people NEET

- Personal Advisers/Key Workers should be case loaded with young people NEET and targets set.
- The Connexions service should track and ensure support for all young people NEET.

Analysis and understanding of data for provision planning and targeting

- The Local Authority and the Connexions service should analyse young people, including by vulnerable groups, who become NEET monthly to focus on length of stay in previous provision and reason/s for leaving and should share this analysis with partners.
- The Local Authority and the Connexions service should analyse young people NEET, including by vulnerable groups, bi-monthly to focus on those awaiting referral; those awaiting an offer; and those awaiting a start date. This analysis should be shared with learning providers and funders to facilitate their targeting activity.
- More generally the Local Authority should review its data management system, the use made of data including where and to whom it goes and the use to which it is put.
- The Local Authority through its youth services should ensure that young people not ready for post-16 learning are engaged in personal development opportunities (PDOs).

Support for vulnerable groups

- See above.
- Learning providers including colleges and those in the third sector should ensure appropriate provision is available for all the NEET cohort.
- Protocols should be agreed with housing agencies so as to reduce the risk of homelessness.

Agreements with individual young people NEET

- Partners should agree a Participation (by young people) Strategy and engage young people in the design of learning provision and in the design and delivery of support services.
- The Connexions service should have an activity agreement with young people NEET.

Retention

Robust information sharing arrangements

- The Local Authority should review its Information Sharing Agreement and ensure its robust implementation by all learning providers and agencies.
- All learning providers should have up-to-date programme information available and easily accessible by young people, their parents/carers and their advisers/support workers.
- All learning providers should have tutorial/support programmes in place.
- Potential early leavers from post-16 provision should be identified and early intervention/support identified both for them and their parents/carers if appropriate.
- Young people who are due to complete programmes without progression plans should be identified.

Access to quality, impartial IAG

- See above
- The Local Authority and the Connexions service together with all learning providers should ensure comprehensive information is available on opportunities post-17 and post-18 including higher education and employment opportunities.
- All learning providers should have programmes in place to provide information to young people.
- All young people due to complete programmes should have access to support for planning their next step.

Links with employers

- An employer engagement strategy should be agreed and implemented in order to increase the availability of good quality training places and employment opportunities.
- Work-based learning providers should work together collaboratively.

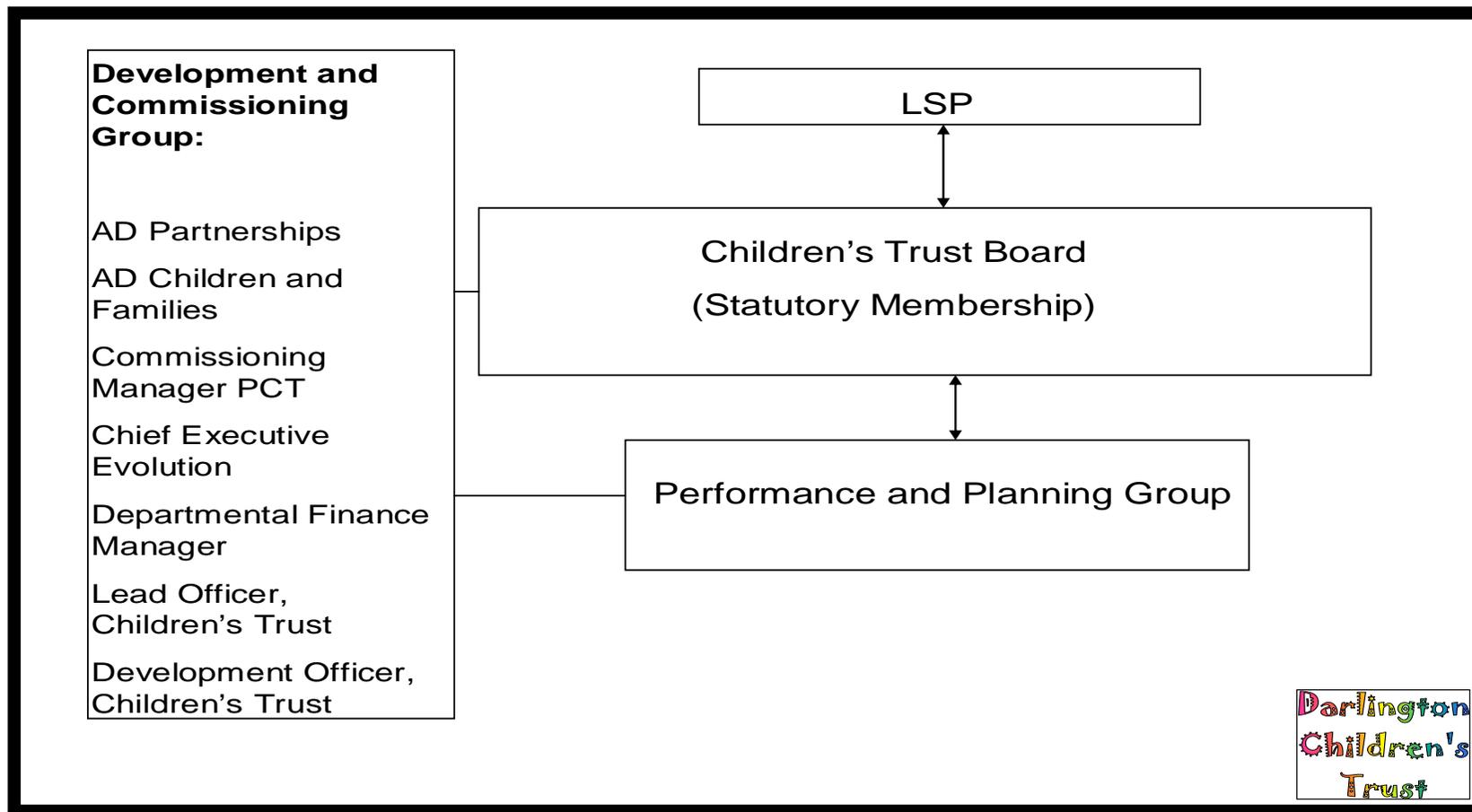
Proposed Reporting Framework

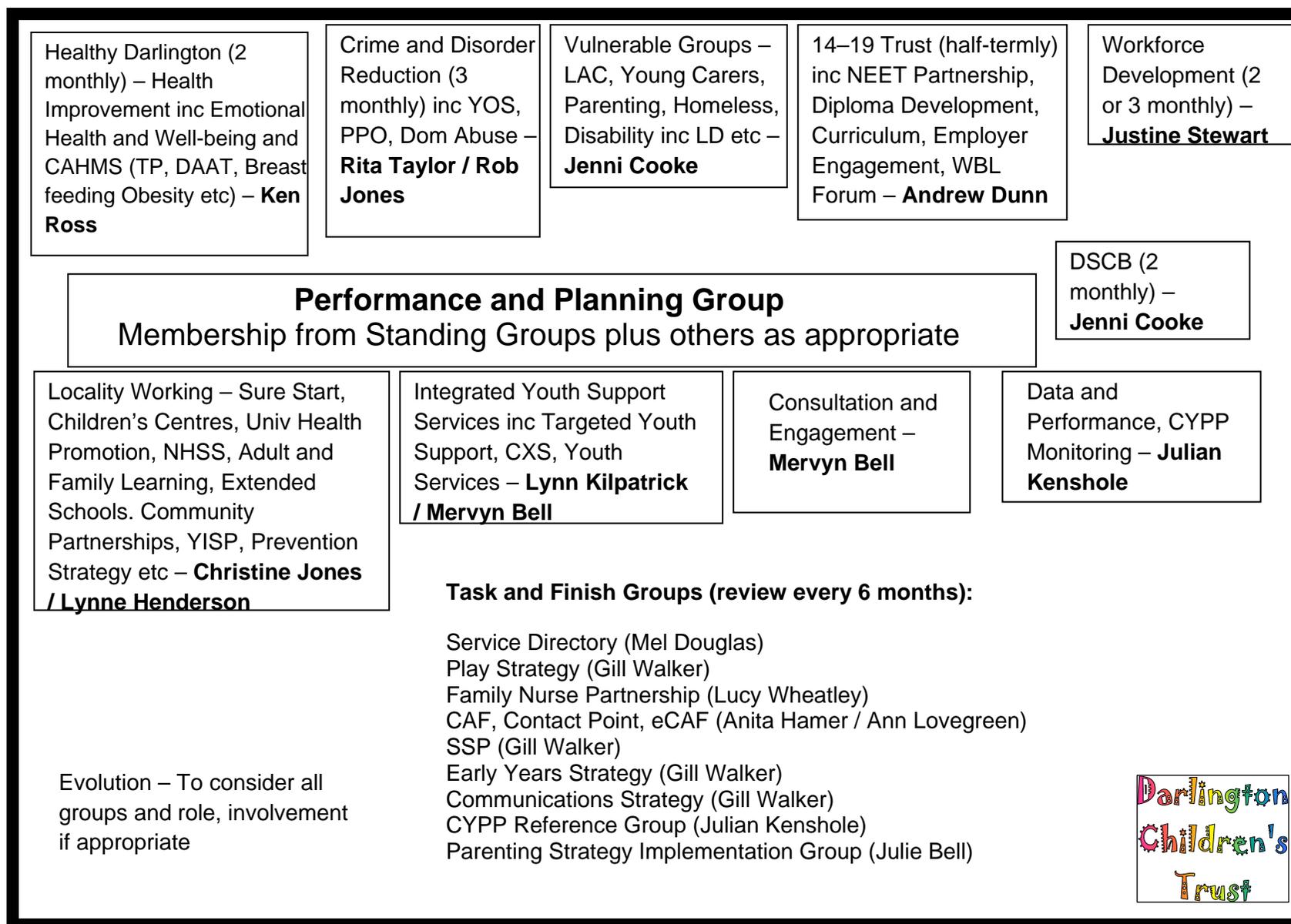
Partner	Report/data	Purpose	Frequency
i) Children's Trust ii) Performance and Planning Group	Headline NEET and 'not knowns'	Monitor progress against PSA target. Recommend actions and timeframe.	Quarterly Monthly
14–19 Partnership	NEET: 16–18 by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Ethnicity • Vulnerable groups • Neighbourhoods 'Not knowns' 16–18 NEET joiners by provider and reasons for leaving EET September Guarantee	Review progress of NEET and 'not knowns' for target groups/individuals/areas and highlight issues Review flow of young people into NEET from schools, colleges, work-based learning providers and employers and highlight issues. Recommend actions and timeframe	Monthly
NEET Reduction Partnership	NEET: 16–18 by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Ethnicity • Vulnerable groups • Neighbourhoods 'Not knowns' 16–18 NEET joiners by provider and reasons for leaving EET	Agree and secure actions recommended/required against a timeframe especially for NEET 'hotspots' including NEET joiners from specific EET destinations	Monthly
Schools/colleges/ Work-based learning providers and other agencies	Year 11 destinations NEET: 16–18 by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Ethnicity • Vulnerable groups • Neighbourhoods 'Not knowns' 16–18 NEET joiners by provider and reasons for leaving EET	Curriculum and support planning	Monthly

NEET Reduction: Everybody's Business – Everybody's Contribution

<p>LSC</p>	<p>Intended destination – year 11</p> <p>NEET: 16–18 by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Ethnicity • Vulnerable groups • Neighbourhoods <p>'Not knowns' 16–18</p> <p>NEET joiners by provider and reasons for leaving EET</p> <p>September Guarantee</p>	<p>Provision planning</p>	<p>Monthly</p>
<p>LAA Partnership</p>	<p>Headline NEET and 'not knowns'</p>	<p>For information</p>	<p>Quarterly</p>

Children's Trust Organisation Chart





Darlington NEET Reduction Partnership

Terms of Reference

Membership

The core membership of the group will comprise:

- Connexions
- Job Centre Plus
- Darlington Borough Council (14-19 representatives, External Funding Team representative, Libraries and Community Learning rep)
- Representation on behalf of vulnerable groups
- Further Education Provider Representative (Darlington College)
- Work Based Learning Provider Representation (JHP and NACRO)
- Secondary School Representative
- Learning and Skills Council Partnership Team
- Representation from the voluntary sector

The group will be chaired by the 14-19 Advisor (IAG), and secretariat and administrative support for the group will be provided by the 14-19 Team, Children's Services.

Purpose

The core purpose of the group is to look strategically at the characteristics and barriers that prevent young people from engaging in learning, and make recommendations regarding areas of development. In doing so the group will contribute to increasing the number of young people engaged in learning and attainment of the target for Level 2 qualifications set by government.

Key Tasks

The partnership will adopt a flexible approach to its work in response to the changing nature of the 14-19 agenda locally, regionally and nationally, whilst maintaining a focus on attainment of NEET annual milestone targets.

Key tasks for the group will be to:

- Influence activity of the Children's Trust and 14-19 Trust to engender wider ownership/activity to address NEET issues

- Oversee the development and implementation of the NEET strategy for Darlington, including completion of the self-assessment document
- Engender wider ownership of the recommendations within the NEET strategy and delivery of key components of the action plan
- Oversee progress against the annual milestone targets and the Local Area Agreement stretch target to reduce the number of young people NEET by 2010 to 5.7%
- Engage with a wider range of partners with responsibility for young people's well-being to become members of the NEET reduction partnership
- Seek to engage with employers and employer intermediaries to raise awareness of NEET issues and explore employer links
- Influence national policy developments to address the needs of Darlington young people
- Identify and seek support from funding streams available to address NEET issues
- Monitor progress against the ESF contract regarding the impact on participation and NEET reduction
- Facilitate collaborative work between providers to develop an appropriate curriculum offer to address the needs of young people within the NEET group
- Facilitate sharing of good practice between partners
- Ensure equality of opportunity for all young people in Darlington

Reporting Lines

The group will engage with the Darlington 14-19 Trust and the Children's Trust via the Children's Trust Performance and Implementation Group. The group will also report to the Local Area Agreement Steering Group on progress against the NEET target. In the longer term the group will look to influence mechanisms established to deliver the new Darlington Community Strategy.

Additional Information

The group will meet every six weeks, and the following will be standing agenda items:

- NEET Strategy and Action Plan
- ESF Delivery Plan
- New developments/good practice
- NEET targets and management information (MI)

The following protocols are to be adopted to ensure effective working relationships are maintained:

- Members are required to nominate a representative to attend on their behalf
- Members are required to treat everyone who attends and reports to the meeting with respect; challenging and supporting appropriately.
- The group develops and maintains a shared, easily understood language
- Members ensure papers are prepared and distributed seven days before meetings
- Minutes with clear action points identified will be sent out within two weeks of the meeting