



Salford NEET Reduction Strategy: **A Review : April 2019 to December 2020**

A strategy and action plan for reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) in Salford

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Executive Summary

Since the launch of the NEET Reduction Strategy in April 2019 there have been developments across each of the six key themes of the strategy, which is encouraging, including a reduction in the proportion of young people who are NEET (academic age 16 and 17 yr olds). However, there are also areas that still require further development. As all partners have been collectively working towards the ambitions laid out in this strategy, we have taken stock, reviewed progress and established a renewed action plan to drive us forward over the coming 12 months.

Of course, the landscape has changed in recent months due to the COVID-19 pandemic and we are now starting to feel its consequences and impact on young people in Salford, regionally and nationally. Therefore it is crucial we analyse and re-focus our efforts to meet the evolving pressures young people now face in a period of national uncertainty and where unfortunately we know young people are likely to be hit hardest across education, employment and training, as well as effects on their mental health, families and finances.

The table shows the NEET and Not Known rates since April 2019 at the launch of this strategy, NEET and Not Known rates are for academic 16 and 17 year olds only. We can see that both rates have largely remained the same when we compare April 2019 to April 2020 and the following few months. However, we can see that during autumn and winter last year NEET did begin to reduce slightly, with a continued strong Not Known rate. It is difficult to say if NEET would have continued to decline, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conversely, the number of young people (16-24 yr olds) claiming out of work benefits has increased by 122% since August 2019, due to the pandemic, which is the largest increase across all age groups. Young people tend to be in employment in the sectors hardest hit such as retail and hospitality. The table shows below the increase in Universal credit claimants between August 2019 and August 2020.

Salford	18-24	All
Alternative Claimant		14,612
Count	2,755	
Change on Year	1,514	7,538
%Change on Year	122%	107%

NEET Stats April 2019 – by month to December 2020

Month/Year	NEET	Not Known
April 2019	261 (5.5%)	87 (1.8%)
May 2019	255 (5.4%)	90 (1.9%)
June 2019	285 (6.0%)	89 (1.9%)
July 2019	310 (6.5%)	83 (1.8%)
August 2019	311 (6.6%)	107 (2.3%)
September 2019	206 (4.3%)	1697 (35.4%)
October 2019	240 (5.0%)	173 (3.6%)
November 2019	229 (4.8%)	112 (2.4%)
December 2019	236 (4.9%)	75 (1.6%)
January 2020	243 (5.2%)	56 (1.2%)
February 2020	252 (5.4%)	61 (1.3%)
March 2020	243 (5.2%)	64 (1.4%)
April 2020	264 (5.6%)	72 (1.5%)
May 2020	264 (5.6%)	76 (1.6%)
June 2020	274 (5.9%)	75 (1.6%)
July 2020	292 (6.2%)	80 (1.7%)
August 2020	312 (6.7%)	89 (1.9%)
Sept 2020	164 (3.3%)	985 (20.11%)
Oct 2020	241 (5%)	134 (2.75%)
Nov 2020	232 (4.78%)	87 (1.79%)
Dec 2020	4.78% tbc	1.32% tbc

This review has consulted partners and outlines the key progress we have collectively made since April 2019. It also considers the impact of COVID-19 more recently which has helped develop a revised action plan that is fit for purpose in the current climate.

1.

Improving our understanding and identification of young people who are at risk of becoming NEET.

This theme aimed to work closer with schools to identify young people who were most at risk of becoming NEET or making a poor transition into post 16 education and training. It looked to establish a revised set of indicators that were founded in research and evidence, as characteristics that mean a young person may be more susceptible to becoming NEET. This would then lay the grounds for increased bespoke interventions and guidance support that were embedded as part of the final year at school and across the summer period.

Progress since April 2019: includes the design and implementation of a 'Post 16 Transition Policy'. This is now the framework of best practice for schools, advisers and services to work with young people who are identified as at risk of becoming NEET, including a greater emphasis on information sharing. There has also been a focus on young people completing alternative provision and supporting their transition into mainstream post 16 provision.



2.

Supporting more young people to make better transitions into appropriate post-16 education and training.

This theme was focused on ensuring timely Information, Advice and Guidance for the most vulnerable groups. This included using the 'test and learn' opportunity through the DfE Alternative Provision Innovation Fund to understand the different approaches this cohort needs. There was also greater investment coming through the Careers and Enterprise Company to provide more meaningful employer encounters and new supporting tools through GMCA as they develop their new online platform. There was also to be additional focus on working with schools to analyse their school leaver data to help inform careers education programmes and support.

Progress since April 2019: The DfE project supporting young people leaving alternative provision has not only supported some of our most vulnerable young people at risk of becoming NEET by providing intensive mentoring but has also allowed us a test and learn approach which has learning applicable to many other young people. This has included greater collaboration between AP settings and post 16 providers and a recognition that schools can do more by connecting closer with AP settings and the young people who access this provision full time. Connexions are now fully embedded into college where they support Salford City College colleagues to support young people at risk of dropping out early. There has been an increase in the summer offer to support the most vulnerable, including additional activity in summer 2020 as part of the COVID-19 recovery which saw GM Higher move some of their offer online. The Prince's Trust has a new 'transition' offer and the local authority and partners designed and developed engaging bike maintenance programmes which were specifically targeted at the risk of NEET Yr 11 leavers and current NEET young people. There has also been additional support for the Elective Home Education cohort at Worsley College where a pilot programme has begun to provide functional skills during Yr 11. Since the March 2020 lockdown the college have also invested in greater communications between the secondary schools and have met with some headteachers to discuss further ways they can work closer to support vulnerable students.

3.

Improving the support offered to young people who are NEET.

This theme sought to provide a place-based approach to NEET reduction to meet the needs of different cohorts of young people across the city. This was to include a wider range of services, including social housing providers. As part of this we looked to address and implement the recommendations following the 'Hidden NEET' research. This included developing a directory of offer and support for young people and their families, putting the tracking of the Yr 14 cohort back into place, following the removal of the requirements by government in recent years. There was also a focus on greater connectivity including services and partners with Department for Work and Pensions and Job Centre Plus, to help develop the 'Youth Obligation Support Programme' and to open up support and provision for young people who are not claiming welfare benefits.

Progress since April 2019: Over the past 12 months there is now a greater focus on putting the tracking processes back in place that government took out, which will see the Yr 14 cohort tracked. This is being explored with GMCA and other local authorities, with Salford already working with Salford City College to discuss data sharing processes to help move this forward. A new online directory has been created '#FindMyFuture' which has signposting resources aimed at young people, parents, services and partners. There are also additional virtual resources from employers and services to help communicate the offer. This will continually evolve to include new government schemes so young people have a 'one-stop shop' to research the training and employment offer. Job Centre Plus and DWP staff are now more integrated into the local networks and are working closely to make new referrals and develop the new 'Youth Hub' model, which is crucial in the COVID-19 recovery period. Also, as part of COVID-19 recovery the local authority developed a 'Redundancy Apprenticeship Fund' which has supported some redundant apprentices to get back into work with new employers to complete their qualification.

4.

Improving access to mental health support for young people who are NEET.

This theme specifically highlighted the need for young people who are NEET to have access to adequate support and services as we know the impact on the emotional health of young people of being NEET can have on their life chances yet some services were not accessible unless young people were engaging in some form of education or training. The aim has been to effectively identify young people whose mental health is a concern whether that be through formal diagnosis or suspected conditions and to ensure that services who work with NEET young people can feed young people's views into relevant partners where funding decisions are made.

Progress since April 2019: Since the launch of this strategy there has been various new services created through the local authority's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Board. This means there is now greater accessibility for young people to a wide range of services through different platforms which suit their needs and confidence. This has been particularly more developed since the COVID-19 lockdown to support more young people whose mental health may have suffered as a result of isolation and other experiences. A mental health lead from Connexions continues to provide the NEET young person voice at a strategic and planning level and we regularly review the number of young people who have mental health concerns through more accurate identification processes. Colleges have also put greater resource into pastoral functions and will continue to invest in this area to mitigate the impact. We are yet to see a direct impact on post 16 engagement in education, training and employment but this is being closely monitored.

5.

Enhancing and developing the post16 education and training offer.

This theme was focused on exploring and expanding new education, training and employment opportunities which meet the needs of the NEET cohort. This involves greater connectivity at a local level, so providers and partners understand the scale of the NEET challenge and any hot spots. This also relies on partners working closely with the local authority to share data and issues where they arise. The local authorities Traineeship Development Fund has been a vehicle to shape and develop new provision. It also enhances existing offers where tangible further training or employment opportunities are part of the whole programme and where employers are integrated into the programmes. We planned to work closer with the college to expand their re-engagement offer as well as with DWP and Greater Manchester Combined Authority to open up employability programmes for young people who are outside of the welfare system.

Progress since April 2019: The local authority has developed and maintained the Provider Network which supports the NEET cohort and has recently integrated this into the wider IAG network with specific quarterly meetings which have a young person focus with an aim to develop existing and new provision. The Build Salford consortium of employers has continued to expand the programmes for young people furthest away from the labour market. Likewise, as part of the DfE programme, Salford City College has developed new provision such as their Passport to Construction programme which has provided a clear 'ramp' to mainstream provision for alternative provision young people. The college have also co-funded the extension of the Transition Mentor role for the AP cohort which will continue to provide intensive support to more AP young people into sustainable post-16 destinations. There has been a recent successful bid to GMCA to develop a new 'Supported Apprenticeship' delivery model to specifically work with AP young people and those completing internships, providing another 'test and learn' approach. Finally, new government schemes will provide an opportunity to engage further with the business community to develop quality opportunities that lead to sustainable employment and further training.

6.

Creating more meaningful employment opportunities and encounters for young people, including those with more complex needs and barriers.

This theme sought to work with the business community to provide more meaningful encounters and opportunities, which responded to the skills needs of employers and the future workforce. We wanted our schools to engage with the funding and support coming through the Careers and Enterprise Community. This is bridging the gap between education and business, whilst supporting them to meet the new Gatsby Benchmarks, demonstrating their commitment to quality careers education. We recognised the need for clear messaging for businesses so they understood the collective ask and that it was a balanced ask to ensure the NEET young people were not further marginalised by a demanding and complex landscape of requests. We wanted to build on the existing supporting mechanisms such as the Salford City Mayor's Charter for Employment Standards, Apprenticeship levy matching employers, social value commitments and wider GM commitments.

Progress since April 2019: The Enterprise Adviser Network is up and running in all Salford secondary schools and Salford City College, and some focus is now on supporting some AP settings to work towards creating more employer activity which supports the specific interests of those young people and is linked to opportunities wherever possible. The new Supported Apprenticeship model will work closely with specific employers to develop a new model which can then be rolled out to other strategically aligned employers as part of

the expansion of plans. Industry employers have been involved in the bike maintenance transition programmes and stronger links are now being created to align this activity with government schemes to develop this pathway further. The #FindMyFuture branding is being developed to include an 'Employer Ask', which will allow young people to virtually 'meet' businesses and explore job roles, industries and specific opportunities. This will help break down barriers and could form part of new recruitment practices which open up the talent pool for businesses. Finally, with the announcement of the Kickstart scheme for six month paid placements for Universal Credit claimants and additional grant funding linked to new apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities, this will be taking a central focus for many employers including the local authority who will act as both a host employer and as a 'Gateway' organisation to support SMEs who want to create quality opportunities.

Finally, we have a greater opportunity to develop the strategy aims and actions further through the new GM Youth Guarantee. This is seeking to maximise the current offer and establish where the gaps are now appearing due to the COVID-19 pandemic for young people. GMCA have consulted with young people aged 11-30yrs old about what's important to them and from this have four thematic areas to focus on. Many of these are aligned to the NEET Reduction Strategy aims, including a focus on making successful transitions and creating equality of opportunity for those that need it the most. It should allow us to engage further with the business community and ensure that local gaps feed into the wider GM landscape for consideration and development.

NEET Reduction Strategy : **A Review April 2019 to Jan 2020**

Following the launch of the Salford NEET Reduction Strategy in April 2019, partners have been working hard to address the issues identified as part of a collaborative approach.

The following sections take us through the progress that has been made across the partners and stakeholders, what has changed, what is the impact and where there is still further work to be done.



1.

Improving our understanding and identification of young people who are at risk of becoming NEET.

Progress since April 2019

Post 16 Transition Policy:

Progress since April 2019:

A Post 16 Transition Policy has been developed with the support and input from schools, services and partners. This has four themes of:

1. **Early identification** in Yr 10, with an ambition to move this earlier as the policy is embedded and related to primary transition process and data. This has included a revised Risk of NEET (RON) Indicator process, which is providing a framework and support from the Raising Participation team at the council to implement this. It has a scoring mechanism which provides a RON rating on a five-point scale from 'Very Low' to 'Very High'. Those young people who have been flagged as at risk of NEET are now flagged and tracked at post-16, each quarter, by Connexions.
2. **Meaningful interventions** for all young people but with a focus on those that are at risk of becoming NEET. This includes a greater focus on regular interventions rather than one-offs and relationship building between the school setting and post 16 providers.
3. **Information sharing** with post 16 providers has been piloted this year with a more formalised approach between schools, LA and Salford City College. This will provide early RONI indicators of those young people who may need additional support from day one and ensures this support is available and appropriate and supports retention.
4. **Ongoing support** for young people who are risk of NEET to support them to settle into their next destination, provides regular tracking to support those who may withdraw early from provision and those who become NEET immediately after leaving school.

In addition:

Earlier information sharing between schools and college: The Heads of Pastoral Support at each college are now working with the nominated contacts at the schools to ensure they understand the pastoral and emotional needs of the individuals identified.

More timely support for college students: The college has a linked Connexions Advisor who is the nominated contact for the Head of Pastoral Support to provide additional advice and guidance for students who may be at risk of withdrawing from college. The advisor is based at the college(s) for some of the week to ensure continuity and co-ordination with Connexions colleagues and staff and students at the college. This will now be going into its third academic year and has proved to be very valuable in supporting retention and providing timely support.

Data Sharing:

Progress since April 2019:

Schools and Post 16: Data sharing processes have been revised with information governance support to ensure the legal obligations that schools and local authority (LA) have are incorporated and are a supportive mechanism. This has led to a new LA Privacy Notice which outlines what data is collected, why it is shared and with whom. As a pilot, in summer 2020, the LA worked closely with Salford City College leaders and pastoral teams to ensure there is a clear process and purpose for this data sharing which is centered around the information being used to ensure timely and appropriate support. The hope is to extend this further with other providers following a full review and evaluation.

School Alternative Provision (AP) referrals:

More detailed referrals are coming through from schools when referring into AP, so that pre-16 AP providers can offer timely support academically and socially.

Impact: The additional information provided by the schools will contribute to the package of support that the college and other settings put in place. This is to ensure that the student is supported on a programme and with their transition to college and to feel secure in their college place and go on to achieve a positive outcome. Additional relevant information enables providers to manage the students from day one, improves retention and ultimately their outcomes.

Summer Transition:

Progress since April 2019:

Earlier summer transition support: Connexions liaised with schools around the Yr 11 young people (YP) at highest risk of NEET and engaged with these YP where possible to support with transition over the longer summer period.

Greater Manchester Higher (GMH)

Summer activities: GMH have a suite of summer support for young people to access. In summer 2020 this was adapted to mostly online support which included:

- 'Summer Olympic' online competitions and impartial GMH resources including 'Be College Ready' (pre-Covid19, GMH delivered sessions for the National Citizen Service programmes which included school leavers).
- Online mentoring offered for all college leavers to support them in their decisions and assist with transition to HE – 'Prepare for HE' (rather than become NEET) with 14 students from target UniConnect Salford wards engaged in the programme.
- 'AskUs' was available throughout the summer where any young person and could questions related to post-school and post-college options.

ForHousing's European Social Fund (ESF):

ForHousing deliver part of the local ESF NEET contract and have provided some additional summer support and opportunities during summer 2020, including key worker and work readiness support. ForHousing intend to use their funding to continue to offer summer programmes to bridge the gap into further education.

Transition planning:

Progress since April 2019:

Alternative Provision (AP) young people:

The DfE APIF (Alternative Provision Innovation Fund) project has shone a light on the importance of supporting young people completing AP as they were a 'forgotten' cohort. Since April 2019 we have seen improved links for YP from AP settings with school careers advisers and between AP settings and post 16 providers.

The Head of Learning Support and the relevant Heads of Pastoral Support at each college centre in Salford have started to work more closely with AP providers to support transition activity that includes visiting individual students at their providers. This was planned to then incorporate a series of one to one college visits in academic year 2019/20 where potential new students would meet curriculum teachers and engage in some small taster activities. This activity unfortunately did not take place due to COVID-19, but the activity will be easily implemented for the 2020/2021 academic year and beyond.

Wider activity for more young people:

In addition, AP students and other vulnerable young people students were given individual time slots to attend enrolment at Salford City College and students who had already been identified were provided with enhanced pastoral support. This model will continue to develop to ensure smooth enrolment processes, which is supported by the earlier information sharing as discussed.

Areas for Development and Actions:

Post 16 Transition Policy needs to be embedded further with a focus on embedding the themes of the policy, along with the revised RONI process. This can be challenging where school staff change or have little knowledge or experience of the transition process, so can take time to establish and will be continually reviewed with each school.

Summer provision for school leavers clearly works well as an engagement tool and we need to invest further in this so we can provide more opportunities to engage, especially for the risk of NEET cohort.

Transition Mentor support has been integral to the success of the DfE APIF project and has resulted in a clear reduction of NEET and additional learning about what works. We need to invest in additional transition mentor resources to support more identified groups within both mainstream and alternative settings.

Earlier links between schools, AP settings and post-16 providers: Although some good work has been identified where there have been earlier links being established between pre and post 16 schools, providers and settings, this is still only in the early stages and more facilitation is required to bring these partners together.

Active tracking of RON cohort will be monthly between September and December each year and then move to quarterly to assess NEET rates, reasons for increases/decreases and a general overview of destinations. This will allow deeper trend analysis to investigate reasons for changes, and then work with schools and providers to identify collectively what can be done differently to reduce NEET. This information and data could also then be used to support bids for transition mentor funding.

2.

Supporting more young people to make better transitions into appropriate post-16 education and training.

Progress since April 2019

Alternative Provision Innovation Fund (APIF):

The DfE APIF project supported some of Salford's most at risk of NEET young people with post 16 planning and transition support. This has already had an impact on this group with a reduction in the number of AP young people becoming NEET over the academic year compared to a baseline cohort, by as much as 25%.

The Transition Mentor role funded by the project is based at City Skills. It has provided an invaluable point of contact, support and collaboration for the AP providers involved and college staff involved in the delivery of the Passport to Construction Course. This role has been extended for a further 2.5 years as a co-funded model between Salford City College and the local authority.

The AP termly reports which go back to schools each half term now includes a 'transition plan' section. This means schools and school-based careers advisors can understand how the young person is moving towards their next steps and ensures no duplication of effort between the mentor, AP setting and the school. This also means transition is better planned between schools and APs and communication has been enhanced.

A Transition Mentor piloted a 'Transition Referral Form' which led to better data sharing processes between the AP, schools, young people and the college. College can now support from day one, and earlier in many cases, to ensure smooth transition and address barriers immediately.

ForHousing pre-16 AP workshop said

“Having access to a Transition Mentor is massively beneficial for our students on the AP programme, helping students see what comes next and reducing their anxiety about future steps”

Data sharing:

Additional destination data is now shared back with previous schools for Yr 13, which allows schools to understand what happens to their students more than 12 months after leaving their school and can inform their careers education and IAG offer for future cohorts.

In addition, Career Connect now provide data to schools on post-16 destinations of leavers at regular intervals over Yr 12 and Y13 using the Risk of NEET (RON) flags. Again, this is allowing schools to understand their leaver cohort in greater detail. This has been especially useful when schools can clearly identify young people that they would not expect to see NEET but who have fallen into NEET at some point, even if only briefly.

The local authority and Connexions meet regularly with local providers both independently and as part of the NEET Provider Network. This enables them to better understand the specific needs and behaviours of the RON cohort and shape programme design accordingly.

IAG for vulnerable groups:

Connexions advisers are linked to key vulnerable groups to provide additional transition support. This has worked well during Yr 11 to ensure appropriate post-16 offers and transition support is underway.

Connexions advisers are embedded and established in the college(s) with good success at preventing drop-out and rapid re-engagement if unable to prevent YP becoming NEET.

Summer Transition programmes:

There is a strong evidence base to support the value of locally delivered summer programmes in impacting positively on the transitions of RON young people. In summer 2019, Keepmoat Homes, Salix Homes and Connexions jointly delivered a construction six-week programme to a RON cohort and in summer 2020 a new set of bike maintenance programmes across three sites were delivered. It was school leavers who mostly engaged in these and many received a refurbished bike at the end, where they wanted one. The partners and employers need to continue to expand this to reach out further to the Yr 11 RON cohort.

ForHousing/ESF and The Prince's Trust were able to offer more summer activities in 2020, which included a suitable virtual offer specifically aimed at supporting Yr 11 transition.

Transition Support:

Traditionally schools cease their activity with Yr 11s at end of school term and for some there is a 'gap' of support until early September. During the pandemic Connexions were asked to broaden their role to cover summer transition for some schools where there was no school-based careers advisor and other vulnerable groups, for those at risk of NEET. We will continue to work with those schools so there is a comparable summer offer, without the reliance of goodwill from partners.

GM Higher (GMH):

GMH's support and offer has been promoted to Elective Home Education (EHE) Coordinator on an ongoing basis and GMH hosted IAG stands at EHE events pre-COVID 19 to provide progression support to EHE young people and their parents/carers.

The Local Authority continues to effectively chair the GM Higher/UniConnect Steering Group and works well with the GMH Hub to ensure that learners' needs from UniConnect target wards in Salford are being met and opportunities are being taken up.

All schools and colleges in Salford have engaged with the GMH/UniConnect programme in 2019/20 with learners from all Salford target schools and colleges accessing support post-March 2019. Salford has one of the best engagements across GM.

130 Y10 learners from 12 schools in Salford engaged with an online six-week mentoring programme 'Go Further,' funded and co-ordinated by GMH between May and July 2020 which focused on building confidence, raising aspirations and decision-making for future options.

Additional developments:

In 2019/20 the college developed a specialist programme aimed at year 10 and year 11 EHE young people across the city. This course has been a huge success with all eight students achieving positive outcomes and progression. This course will expand in 2020/21 to accommodate up to 20 young people.

The Prince's Trust TEAM programmes at Worsley College have continued to recruit well and provide an intensive programme that leads to a qualification and progression on to other courses either at the college or elsewhere.

In 2019/20 initial meetings were held by the college to support EAL (English as an Additional Language) learners transitioning from partner schools. The Head of the Department for ESOL at the college is working with the local authority to refine and standardise a pathway to college. This formal establishment of these pathways on age 16-18 ESOL courses or on to mainstream college courses (dependent on the level of language of the student) is a key priority for the college in 2020/21.

The college produced a 'School Link' bulletin that was shared with the local authority and partner schools over the course of lockdown which gave key updates, dates and details of what to expect at enrolment. It is intended that this bulletin will continue to be produced and shared with schools over the academic year 2020/21 to support stronger links with schools.

The designated Safeguarding Lead at SCC Group met with the Head Teacher of Oasis Academy and Salford City Academy over lockdown to discuss the transition of vulnerable Year 11 pupils particularly in the context of the pandemic. The college would like to continue to meet with partners schools to further develop relationships in this area.

Areas for Development and Actions:

College leavers with no onward destination data was received quite late in the summer term. This process could be brought forward next year so they can be targeted and supported earlier. This can be part of the new government 'Kickstart' scheme to support young people into six months paid work.

The local authority will continue to work with schools to ensure there is a comparable summer offer from the school to aid transition during the long summer break, especially for those who are at risk of becoming NEET.

Career Connect have developed and piloted the 'Feeling Good Functioning Well' tool that develops confidence and resilience and could imbue the RON cohort with some of the key skills they will need to make effective transitions. This needs further exploration.

Improving the support offered to young people who are NEET.

Progress since April 2019

18+ tracking:

The tracking of the 18+ cohort is actively being explored to be put back into place as per the 'Hidden NEET' report recommendations. This will require collaboration to understand GDPR and the mechanisms that are needed to establish an effective process. This is being supported by Salford City College Group, Connexions, other GM LAs and GMCA.

Directory:

The LA has broadened the #FindMyFuture brand as an information hub for YP as part of the council's website. This has begun to form a directory of support services and signposting to the full range of education, employment and training in Salford has been developed for all age groups. This will evolve as part of the COVID-19 response locally and nationally but also supports the Hidden NEET recommendation to have a directory for young people and parents that covers older young people. The LA will continue to develop and update this content every month.

DWP/Youth Obligation:

Good progress has been made over the last 12 months on developing closer links and communications between local providers/services to support the four Salford Jobcentres with the DWP Youth Obligation Support Programme (YOSP) for 18-21 year olds claiming UC. Regular partner meetings and events have helped to strengthen the links between the Jobcentres and local providers, services and colleges, and helped to 'upskill' Jobcentre Work Coaches on jobs and training opportunities available in Salford and GM. More recently this has evolved into the existing IAG Network, which will have a regular 16-24 focus, where new national schemes will be analysed and shaped.

Risk Of NEET:

As already mentioned, Connexions have picked up more young people who become NEET earlier, due to being able to offer earlier intervention with those at risk of NEET over the summer period. Also, the work as part of the Alternative Provision Innovation Fund (APIF) has provided the opportunity for more formalised relationships between AP providers, post 16 providers and schools and additional intelligence is shared to support young people at risk of becoming NEET.



Connexions also launched a digital offer during the pandemic and expanded their service offer temporarily to include YP aged 19-25 and was part of the wider 'Spirit of Salford' support.

In response to some young people being made redundant due to the COVID-19 pandemic Salford City Council and the Build Salford consortium of employers developed a small 'Salford Apprenticeship Redundancy Fund'. This provides small incentives for new employers to take on the apprentice and provide them with work in order to fully complete their apprenticeship. This has supported four young people so far across construction, administration and engineering roles.

College:

The Head of Learning Support at the college and the Heads of Pastoral Support have formalised the transition process and further developed relationships with AP providers in the city to ensure that Year 11 students are provided with the right advice and guidance to support them in their next steps.

Areas for Development and Actions:

DWP are looking to create and maintain new 'Youth Hubs' (physical and virtual) in Salford from Autumn 2020 which will further strengthen links between JCP and Salford partners and providers to develop and deliver a range of 'youth offers' for 18 -24 year olds. These will be co-located with local partner organisations to offer a range of services to young people in the community. The improved visibility of 'Youth Hubs' to 'Hidden NEETs' should improve engagement with JCP and support services. It should also ensure new national schemes are accessible by more young people whom they are suitable for. Alongside this DWP have increased investment in Youth Work Coaches and the council and partners are supporting them to identify and engage with more young people to support them into suitable, meaningful and sustainable employment.

There is still some distance to go in terms of developing a seamless pathway for RON young people. There is definite potential for more collaboration between providers and to do this earlier and more consistently integrate Connexions support where learners are approaching the end of their programme with no identified onward destination. This will avoid the NEET 'churn' and periods of NEET where engagement and motivation can dip.



4.

Improving access to mental health support for young people who are NEET.

Progress since April 2019

Mental Health Lead:

A Mental health lead has been identified by Connexions who regularly feeds in mental health issues related to the NEET cohort. This is important so that wider partners and services understand the impact on young people age 16+ and can respond appropriately and ensure young people who are NEET are represented in the decision-making processes related to service development.

Identification:

Young people who have mental health and emotional health concerns are now recorded on the Connexions database to help better reporting and understanding. This includes three categories of; MH concerns (diagnosed), MH concerns (historical) and MH concerns (suspected). The third category allows us to record anecdotal evidence from YP and their parents where there has been no formal diagnosis or the YP does not engage with MH services.

Emotionally Friendly Settings:

Salford City College Group are taking part in piloting 'Emotionally Friendly Settings' implementation, which has come through the 'Emotionally Friendly Schools' initiative. We hope more providers will be encouraged to take up this offer to raise awareness with colleagues working with young people in the city.

Access to information and advice:

The online emotional health directory has been revised and formatted to ease navigation through the document and is accessed via the following platforms: Partners in Salford (Salford Thrive), Local Offer and WUU2. We promote the Emotional Health and Wellbeing (EHWB) webpages, online directory and email bulletin to ensure that professionals in Salford are updated on activities, resources and information to support them in their role.

Supporting the workforce:

The EHWB training programme has now moved online and the Youth Mental Health First Aid will be starting delivery again. One area of work will focus on the online training offer from 'MindEd', with key modules identified and promoted. Throughout the pandemic we have fully utilised the Thrive email bulletin to ensure that professionals in Salford are updated on activities, resources and information to support them in their role.

Staff from Salford City College have attended the Breaking Barriers CPD event at University of Bolton to improve transition support for young people entering Higher Education.

New support:

Mental Health Support Services that NEET young people can access have remained buoyant during the pandemic and have maintained strong visibility through several networks including the Spirit of Salford Helpline. There have also been a number of new support services aimed at young people. These use a variety of platforms to connect with young people from text services, live chat to more one-to-one support.

The changes to the GCSE A level grading system have left some young people feeling rejected and anxious, with the next steps into college, university or other programmes in limbo. This has affected the mental and emotional health of young people, leaving many not knowing where they would be moving onto in September. Colleges are investing more resources into supporting these young people and overcome the feelings and emotions they have associated with the circumstances, as well as the general impact of lockdown and being out of education for so long. Lockdown isolation following the pandemic may have impacted negatively on the emotional wellbeing of NEET young people and make them more hesitant to engage and seek opportunities. We are awaiting to see if there will be an impact on the participation of young people as they settle into colleges and further training.

Each of the Salford City College centres has a dedicated pastoral function with a Head of Pastoral Support, Pastoral Leader and Progress Coach. One of their key objectives is to support young people with their social, emotional and mental health problems. There is also access to a dedicated counselling service. A wellbeing room is provided for all students and the Student Council have been proactive in establishing activities throughout the week. These include craft sessions, reading corner, book club and happy café as part of an extensive enrichment offer. YMCA mental health champions are also available to support students who need one-to-one mentoring.

The GM Higher offer has looked to address barriers to progression for young people linked to low confidence, resilience and wellbeing and these are being provided to all schools and colleges in Salford. GM Higher also offers a targeted learner programme to all Y9-13 learners in Salford with activities and support for learners with mental health conditions, disabilities, long-term health conditions and learning difficulties. Learners from Salford have previously accessed pre-16 and post-16 'wellbeing' days at Manchester Metropolitan University. GM Higher support and opportunities are now included in the iThrive directory of events.

Areas for Development and Actions

The EHWP and partners are investing in further development areas linked to: Neuro development pathway development/ implementation; Mental Health in Education /'Thrive in education team'; LGBT / CYP plan developments and progress; Transitions Policy and pathways development to support improved transitions for YP to adult services for those with Special Educational Needs/mental health/complex needs.

Partners comment that they regularly see the impact of mental health issues across programmes for young people. Therefore, continuing to capture the data will help give a clearer picture of the need and hopefully inform a case for services to support these issues. This needs to be across all partners and providers with a standard way of collecting and collating this, alongside a way to share and use this data.



Enhancing and developing the post-16 education and training offer.

Progress since April 2019

NEET Provider Network:

The NEET Provider Network has been established and meets each quarter. This is a mixture of local colleges, training providers, support and IAG services and social housing providers. This forum allows partners to understand the local NEET landscape including full data performance and NEET hot spot areas, feedback areas of concern, give provision updates and shape programme delivery. This is a generally well attended group and is critical to ensuring key updates are shared and keeping a regular and meaningful dialogue between partners, local authority and young people.

Partnership Agreements (PAGs):

PAGs are in place with all providers and reviewed bi-annually. These provide an opportunity to discuss recruitment, young people progressions and pick up any areas for development.

Traineeship Development Fund (TDFs):

TDF continues to fund pre-employability programmes such as Build Salford. The Build Salford traineeship has a tried and tested model which is heavily supported by employers who can provide the placements and experiences that young people find so valuable. The funding is limited so further exploration is needed to raise the profile of those models and find more like-minded employers related to other sectors to reach a wider range of young people. This will be particularly important in the COVID-19 recovery period where many government initiatives are linked to Universal Credit claimants, rather than the wider NEET cohort.

Additional provision:

A bid to the GMCAs 'Removing Barriers to Apprenticeships' fund was submitted and successful for a 'Supported Apprenticeship' programme for ex-AP and supported interns from Sept 2020 to Dec 2021. This is an innovation fund which has a clear 'test and learn' approach. This will see a minimum of ten young people move into apprenticeships with additional wraparound support, as well as training for recruiting managers and teams to better support apprentices. This will involve working with employer partners to create these opportunities and will be supported in-kind by other partners.

Supported and Targeted Traineeships were developed by Salford City College over summer 2020, to provide opportunities for young people where employers might not be able to take them onto a full apprenticeship immediately but will be able to once their business/sector recovers. Luckily the Targeted Traineeship model was not required as sectors seemed to recover better than expected, however this is a model that could easily be re-introduced should employers want to commit but where COVID-19 hampers recovery.

As already mentioned in the 'Transition' theme the council have invested in further 'Keep warm' summer programmes as engagement provision for school leavers and those who are NEET. This included the three-bike maintenance programmes across the city in summer 2020, with support from The Prince's Trust. We are looking for further investment to develop this further to reach more young people as part of their preparation for post-16 and beyond.

The new government schemes 'Kickstart' and employer grants for traineeships and apprenticeships places are now beginning to take shape. For the Kickstart scheme the LA is working in partnership with local organisations and SMEs to create quality opportunities and working with the DWP to ensure smooth recruitment processes which support young people who would benefit most from these opportunities.

Salford City College have also developed a 'nurture' group offer at Eccles/Skills for Working Life department, which has been a 'tweak' on existing provision. This has opened up the foundation department offer to reach a wider cohort who would benefit from this style of provision and support but who traditionally may have not considered applying. A pilot group was identified for September 2020 start and so far, this is progressing well.

The college also supported the extension of the successful 'Passport to College' offer to include more specialist curriculum pathways such as Passport to Construction at City Skills and Passport to Creative and Digital at Future Skills. This has provided a term by term approach to college curriculum which is better suited to this cohort and where young people can gain qualifications, increase their confidence and move onto the next level or other programmes.

Worsley College has expanded their curriculum to provide additional progression opportunities or direct entry for young people in the west locality. The Vocational Studies course has been very popular at level 1 as it provides a diverse curriculum allowing young people to have a taster of different subjects. This was extended to a level 2 offer for 2019/20 and for 2020/21, level 3 courses have been added in Business and Sport.

We have seen a small increase in new Traineeship provision through Foundation 92, which is a Broughton based programme centred around sports. Work placements are available in new companies such as Hotel Football, Bupa and MUFC Foundation themselves. Foundation 92 have also secured additional funding through ESF and The Prince's Trust to work with SEND young people and those at risk of offending. These programmes may be offered in other parts of the city where provision is lacking.

Build Salford has seen an expansion in programmes including:

- Two 'Introduction to Construction' (for 18+) took place in October 2020 for those who were interested in the traineeship in April 2020 (this programme was postponed). COVID-19 compliant delivery enabled these young people to secure CSCS cards, and two young people continued to receive support to get them work ready. All others were supported into apprenticeships and entry level employment in the sector.
- Two new 'Construct your Future' programmes funded by Keepmoat Homes and supported by Salix Homes, and Willmott Dixon, ran in November 2020 for 17/ 18-year olds. These ran consecutively for two days per week for six weeks until Christmas. In January 2021 Build Salford Construction members aim to offer government funded Kickstart jobs that should offer a pathway for participants onto apprenticeships with the employers in the summer
- The usual traineeship programme, which was postponed from April 2020 will hopefully take place in March/April 2021. This is targeted at the NEET cohort, which will be especially useful for those who are ineligible for Kickstart opportunities.



Areas for Development and Actions:

Partners and training providers should avoid 'silo' working to ensure the best possible outcomes for young people by ensuring they also signpost to 'next step' provision to avoid unnecessary 'cliff-edges' upon programme completion. As part of this there are still some young people who complete provision such as traineeships, without having achieved the desired outcomes (functional skills quals/ work experience/onward destination).

There is a broad provision offer locally though this tends to be concentrated in the city centre and largely follows the traineeship model. Therefore, we need to invest in more re-engagement/pre-traineeship/Personal Development Opportunity provision across all parts of the city. Little Hulton is of concern, with the highest level of NEETs in Salford. However, it is generally geographically the furthest away from most of the provision available. Therefore, satellite or 'pop-up' provision would be a useful consideration in Little Hulton or Walkden.

Further investment in the transition mentor support (as highlighted from the APIF project) is proving to be very valuable for some of the city's most vulnerable young people. However, further investment is required to reach the full cohort to provide a more enhanced offer of support at key transition points.

We need to do more to ensure the messaging is clear to young people and parents about offers such as internships and Build Salford, so they are seen as viable alternatives to the mainstream offer which is not always appealing or suitable for them.

Creating more meaningful employment opportunities and encounters for young people, including those with more complex needs and barriers.

Progress since April 2019

Enterprise Advisor Network (EAN)/Careers:

EAN is now set up in most secondary schools and supported by an Enterprise Coordinator. This is increasing the number of meaningful employer encounters as part of the implementation of the Gatsby benchmarks. Three Salford schools are in the GM Careers Hub which is soon to be expanded to a further three.

The college also continues to work with a nominated Business Enterprise Advisor. This has facilitated work shadowing and work experience opportunities notably in the construction and motor vehicle sector.

The college is also aligned to the Gatsby Benchmark Framework and completes the COMPASS evaluation tool with the Enterprise Advisor as part of a continued process of improvement and development. This is improving students' preparation for life after college and into the world of work.

Vulnerable groups:

The two Supported Internship programmes continues across Salford Royal Foundation Trust, University of Salford and Salford City Council. These are providing valuable work experience that leads into employment outcomes for some. There is still further work to do to ensure more suitable employment opportunities are created both internally at these employers but also through our wider partnerships. Earlier identification of work ready individuals is taking place during the programme to help identify these opportunities.

Additional developments:

Salford City Council and partners at ForHousing, Salford City College and Career Connect have successfully secured funding from the GMCA for a new Supported Apprenticeship programme, which will be delivered from Sep 2020 – Dec 2021, supporting young people with broad SEND into apprenticeships. This support will feature transition mentoring, functional skills, employer training and support and a legacy stream to embed this style of provision with more employers.

A Salford Apprenticeship Redundancy fund was created in response to COVID-19 where young people have been made redundant from apprenticeships. This has supported four young people so far to secure new employment to complete their apprenticeship.

The Salford Skills for Business Apprenticeship Fund was created in 2019, which has supported some young people into apprenticeships by funding the training element for SMEs. There are new opportunities through the COVID-19 response regarding grants for employers which will provide a wider incentive and package for employers to utilise to provide more opportunities.

As mentioned in summer 2020 three bike maintenance programmes were created to support risk of NEETs and current NEETs which were delivered by industry experts and further funding is now being sorted to create similar opportunities for more young people.



New webpages 'Find My Future' (FMF) were created to provide a 'one-stop' shop for young people and their parents/carers to access the full range of signposting related to education, employment, training, IAG, finance and emotional health. A virtual #FMF week, which saw over 7,500 views of the content over the week, was also developed to reach more young people and offer additional signposting to support where they needed it. Following this a wider employer 'ask' has been developed to create new virtual content such as employer videos of real people who live or work in Salford talking about their career journey, their job role/sector, plus virtual business tours. All these resources will be provided to schools, colleges and young people up age 24 to help inspire and provide information in the absence of some face to face delivery. We hope this can continue to develop and provide a platform for further opportunities such as virtual work experience.

Following the DfE Alternative Provision project we want to support AP providers to enhance their careers education offer by supporting them to link with more employers and partners to ensure these young people do not miss out on experiences and encounters. We now have the support from GMCA, through their Enterprise Coordinator function, to develop this further with increased number of employer encounters and greater connectivity for AP providers with employers and post 16 provision.

The Hamilton Davies Trust are supporting Irlam and Cadishead College to broker links with local businesses to support the school careers education programme.

The GM Higher activities on offer for Salford schools and colleges are all mapped to the Gatsby benchmarks with several incorporating encounters with employers, employees and workplaces. Learners from Salford schools and colleges have taken part in GMH workshops incorporating employability skills, industry insight days and activities involving employers and employability skills delivered by external providers which are commissioned and funded by GM Higher.

Salford City College now have a 'Destinations Strategy' which ensures that all students, irrespective of entry level are supported to access work related and work experience opportunities in the form of guest speakers, employer site visits, skills workshops and work experience placements. This sits alongside an established and extensive enrichment programme supporting students with their personal and social and employability softer skills development.

Employers including Bowmer and Kirkland have provided a number of work placements for 'Hidden' young people, which resulted in nine taking up paid employment through Bowmer and Kirkland or through their supply chain, with many continuing further training.

There are a range of new government schemes launched to support COVID-19 recovery including:

KICKSTART SCHEME

Kickstart: This is a £2 billion fund for England, Scotland and Wales to create high quality, six-month work placements for young people aged 16 to 24 on Universal Credit and deemed to be at risk of long-term unemployment. First placements are expected to start in November 2020, with the scheme running until at least December 2021. Funding available for each job will cover 100% of the relevant national minimum hourly wage (under 18 £4.55 /18-20 £6.45/ 21-24 £8.20) for a minimum 25 hours a week, plus the associated employer National Insurance contributions and employer minimum automatic enrolment contributions. Kickstart is not an apprenticeship, but participants may move on to an apprenticeship at any time during or after their job placement.

Apprenticeships and traineeship employer grants: Employers who hire a new apprentice between 1 August 2020 and 31 January 2021 will receive a payment of £2,000 for apprentices aged 16 to 24 or £1,500 for apprentices aged 25 and over. These payments are in addition to the £1,000 payment for taking on an apprentice age 16-18yrs old or those age 19-24 with an EHCP or who are in the care of the local authority.

The government will also provide an additional £111 million this year for traineeships in England, to fund high quality work placements and training for 16-24-year olds. For the first time ever, the government will fund employers who provide trainees with work experience, at a rate of £1,000 per trainee.

LA role within Kickstart: the LA has applied to be a host employer, by providing a minimum of 30 Kickstart placements between November 2020 and December 2021. These will be across service areas and will include wraparound support to ensure young people are supported to make the most of the opportunity. There will also be a clear focus on progression throughout the placement, and where necessary will involve working with our partners to secure further employment after the six months. Alongside this the LA has applied to be a 'gateway' organisation to support SMEs who have less than 30 placements, to also provide quality opportunities. This role allows the LA to ensure quality experiences and to support the wider business community to engage with young people who may not otherwise gain these placement offers. The hope is this will allow a platform for even further engagement and creation of other opportunities after the placements are completed.

Areas for Development and Actions:

There is strong evidence that engagement and support with transition (such as summer partnership-delivered summer programmes) can improve outcomes at transition points. Greater investment is needed here, especially in light of COVID-19 recovery, which is likely to lead to NEET levels increasing, coupled with greater competition for employment and training opportunities, which could further marginalise those furthest away from the labour market.

Young people who are already in an alternative provision at school need a wider range of post 16 offers such as internships and Build Salford as they can accommodate the individual needs of these young people. These programmes are vital to give a range of outcomes for students other than the traditional college and apprenticeship places which don't suit every young person.

GM Youth Guarantee:

The new GM Youth Guarantee is focused on securing the future for young people in GM so they can prosper. It includes protecting those already in education, employment or training, but who face immediate challenges and potential displacement due to the pandemic. It aims to promote current and emerging opportunities to help support young people to be ready for life, learning and work and it will support the progression of young people through quality education, employment and training. The guarantee is led by the 'Task Force' chaired by former Olympic athlete Diane Modahl and supported through a Youth Advisory panel which has a minimum of two youth representatives from each local authority area.

The consultation with young people has revealed four key themes of focus of

- Keeping Connected – digital inclusion for better access to technology and support to develop digital skills and better access to discounted and safe travel

- Staying well – better access to mental health services and more opportunities to engage in social action and greater access to information
- Making effective transitions – supporting those affected by the impact of grade changes and missed education, increased access to careers advice and work-related experiences. Better support for financial issues and life skills and an increase in suitable provision for NEET young people
- Removing economic inequalities - employers to have more support to create jobs and apprenticeships for young people and ensure they have equal access. Young people will have more support to find a job, apprenticeship or training opportunity and opportunities for re-training where required

Throughout each theme GM will look to:

1. Maximise the current offer
2. Develop new programmes and initiatives where needed
3. Identify where further investment and resources are needed

They have already identified some ways they intend achieve some of this:

The Response - to implement a differentiated offer that supports and improves young people's outcomes.

Guaranteed work shadowing opportunities.	Guaranteed college places for all 16-18 year olds.	More HE and adult learning opportunities.	Increased digital access and inclusion.
A comprehensive travel offer that builds on the principles of Our Pass.	Improved access to digital and physical mental health services.	More social action, community and cultural engagement opportunities.	Retraining and re-skilling for 19+ year olds.
Quality careers education, information, advice and guidance(CE/IAG)	An ILM for those at risk of long-term unemployment	Continued high quality apprenticeship availability.	Increased digital access and inclusion.

How this can support NEET Reduction in Salford:

The GM Youth Guarantee has the potential to:

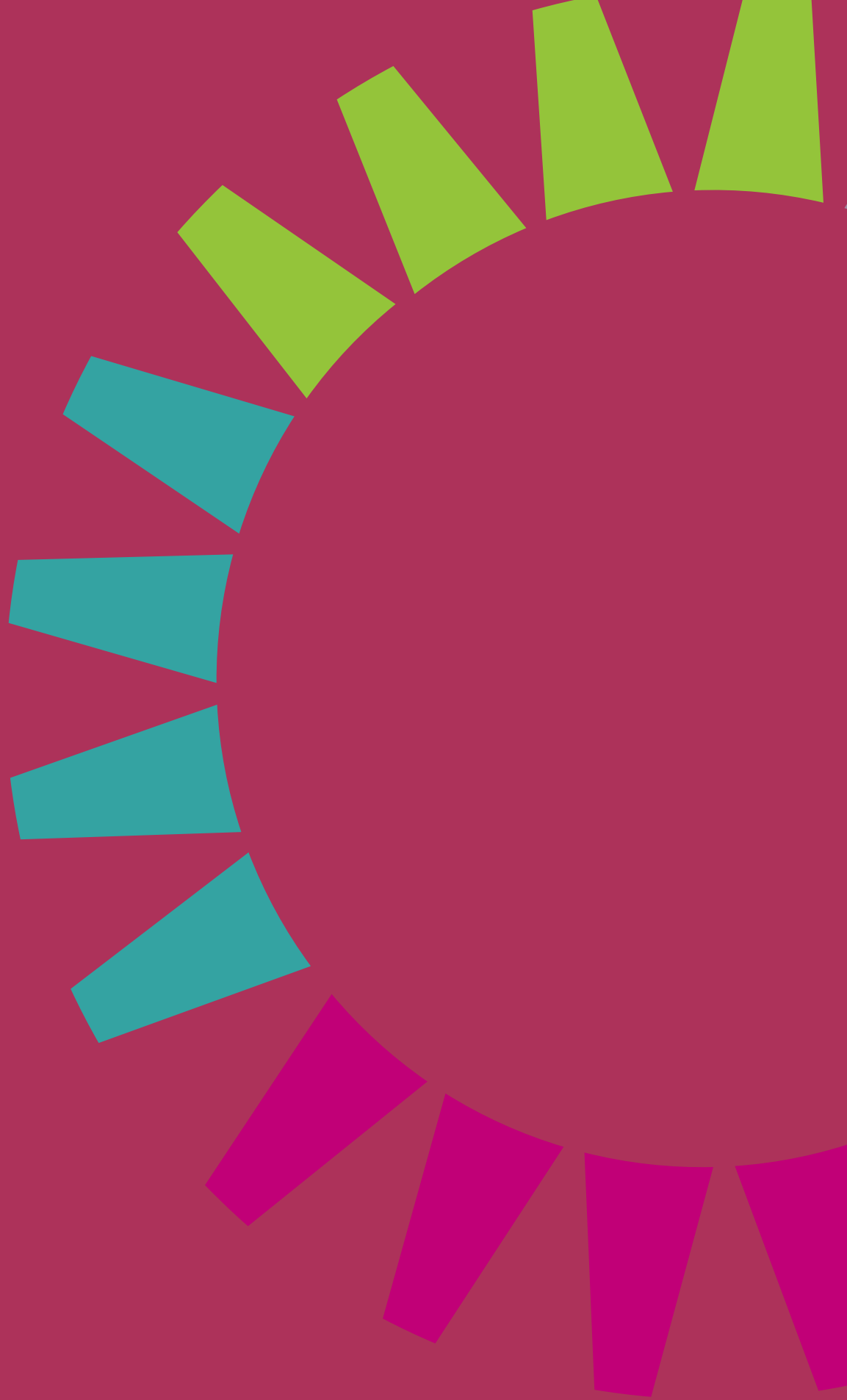
- Provide practical support to ensure our young people stay digitally and geographically connected to opportunities as they become available. In order to capitalise on this, we need to ensure we understand what the gaps are related to IT and wifi access and also related to the cost of travel.
- Ensure young people are aware of the full range of emotional health support across Salford. We already do this well through the various partnerships and communications but more services are coming on stream so we need to utilise social media and connectivity through schools, colleges and providers to ensure those messages reach the young people who need it most. Alongside this a continuous process of understanding the gaps and need is crucial so services can be adapted, and new ones developed.
- As highlighted throughout much of the Salford NEET Reduction Strategy, we recognise the importance of supporting young people with the various transitions they make. The GM Youth Guarantee will support us to provide meaningful employer encounters including work shadowing and improved careers education and guidance.
- Finally if the guarantee is able to create quality opportunities from across the business community linked to apprenticeships, traineeships and other entry route opportunities, this will allow us to ensure equality of opportunity and provide a targeted response to those who need our help the greatest.

We know that the COVID-19 pandemic will have a disastrous impact on youth unemployment, however in recent months it has provided an opportunity to do things differently and has driven forward change at an accelerated pace. This is positive and collectively we must now galvanise on this renewed focus, attention and investment and make the most of it for the benefit of Salford young people.

Concluding Remarks:

As we have detailed there has been some huge strides taken since April 2019, from across all partners and providers, which demonstrates their commitment to the young people of Salford. However there is more to do and we now call on all our partners to re-group and focus on the existing challenges ahead. These challenges now consist of new areas, due to the pandemic, and we will have to find creative and innovative solutions and we have no doubt that collectively we can rise to this through the strong partnership working that has been developed. An aligned action plan has now been developed to sit with this strategy, which will form the basis of our focus over the next 12 months.

To share any comments, thoughts or questions, please get in touch with sarah.scanlan@salford.gov.uk



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