

**Not in Employment Education or Training
Scrutiny Select Committee**

21 October 2009

Present at the meeting:

Councillor Ms P L Holland
(Chairman)
Councillor B J Fagan
Councillor E Russon
Councillor W Rotherham

Councillor Mrs A Turnock
Councillor Mrs M J Whiteside
Councillor W J Wilkes

Officers in attendance

Gary Finch – Principal Officer – Overview and Scrutiny
Janet Lumley – Administrative Assistant Democratic Services

Officers presenting reports

Sue Astbury – Head of Service - Integrated Support, Children and Young People's Service
Elaine Dann - Service Manager - Connexions

.1 Apologies for absence: Councillor S Dawber

.2 Whipping Declarations: Government guidance expected Members of the Select Committee not to act in accordance with party whipping and that, if they did, they were to declare it.

There were no declarations made.

.3 Proposed Outline and Scope of the Study: The Principal Officer – Scrutiny, Gary Finch, introduced a document detailing the proposed outline and scope of the Select Committee and setting out the suggested terms of reference to be used by the Select Committee in an effort to reduce the amount of young people between 16 and 18 not in employment, education or training (NEET). Following a discussion on the report, the following salient points were raised:-

- Members were keen to ensure a positive outcome to the problem of those NEET in the Borough and were anxious that they engaged with the community and did not merely talk about the problem at meetings.
- The Committee should not be officer led but should take its focus from elected members who have experience of some of the problems in their areas.
- It was vital to engage with a variety of stakeholders that had first hand experience of those youngsters affected by being NEET.

Resolved: The Select Committee accepts the report and agrees to proceed within the scope outlined whilst understanding that this may change as the Committee proceeds with its work.

.4 Background and Introduction to the Issue of NEET's. Officers from the Children and Young People's Service, Sue Astbury and Elaine Dann, gave a presentation on reducing the proportion of NEET's in the Wigan Borough. The Select Committee was given an idea of the many schemes Connexions had in place to help with the problem. It was reported that there were currently 976 young people currently NEET in Wigan, but the group is very diverse and there were many different reasons for finding themselves in this situation. One solution would not fit all the problems and it would be one of the aims of the Committee to find as many different approaches as possible.

A significant number of those in the group were inactive ie; teenage mums, and there were more males NEET than females. It was suggested that the introduction of the Education Maintenance Grant had made a difference to encouraging young people to stay in education.

Councillor B J Fagan pointed out that there also seemed to be a problem with the system of work experience where some young people were taken into employment and time and money was spent training them only for them to leave and the problem to begin again. Wigan had become a town of part time employment, with a lot of vacancies filled by part time women workers. Also a lot of the traditional industries that would have offered apprenticeships were now lost to the area.

Resolved: The Select Committee:-

- (1) requests that the 976 young people currently NEET in the Borough be localised to make it easier for members to identify if the problem is more prevalent in some areas than others.
- (2) requests that the Chairman, the Principal Officer – Scrutiny and the Service Manager - Connexions, meet before the next meeting to draw up an action plan to progress this work.
- (3) thanks the Officers for their very detailed presentation and requests that a variety of case studies be included for future meetings of the Committee.

(Councillor B J Fagan declared a personal and non prejudicial interest in this item as his daughter is a member of the Children Young People and Families Scrutiny Committee and his son works in the Benefits Agency).

.5 Purpose and date of next meeting. Resolved: The next meeting of this Select Committee be organised following the formulation of the action plan.

Chairman

The meeting concluded at 8:00 p.m.