

Provision of Flexible Learning Opportunities for Young People in Lancashire

Gap Analysis Report (Part 3) Vulnerable Characteristics

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1 Executive Summary

This report discusses the barriers to young people's learning in Lancashire, updating the situation on the six characteristics traditionally reported and looking at emerging barriers. The purpose of the report is to inform those commissioning learning opportunities for young people of the needs which will need to be addressed.

Of the traditional characteristics, some are less prevalent for 16-18 year olds (such as teenage parenthood), or are reported differently (such as young offenders). Others have increased in number (children in care/leaving care, asylum seekers) creating different demands of the education and training system. There have been major changes to the system for identifying support needs for those with special educational needs, with the introduction of the Education, Health and Care plan. A co-ordinated approach to promotion of the local offer for those with and EHC plan has also been introduced.

Of the emerging issues, which are requiring additional focus by those offering education and training, mental ill-health is the most prevalent, now affecting much greater proportions of young people of all demographics. In addition, 'estrangement' from families is now much more widely recognised in terms of the disadvantages to young people. This includes young people who live with relatives who are not parents, stay with friends or live independently but who are not (yet) homeless.

A major finding is that it is no longer as relevant to address just the one barrier for many young people. There are often now multiple barriers in place and holistic social therapies may be needed. An example is the reported increase in young people who have a dual diagnosis of mental health problems alongside special educational needs.

The report recommends that the findings are:

- used inform the design of future calls for activity for discretionary funding, recognising the role that ESF funded programmes have historically fulfilled in this area.
- shared with upper tier local authorities for consideration alongside their Statement of Priorities for post-16 education and training and their subsequent discussions with the ESFA.
- shared with professionals working with young people facing the disadvantages featured in this report for further comment and discussion.
- made available as a research document to learning provider networks and project steering groups for consideration in design of provision.

2 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to identify the barriers which are hindering young people's progress in learning and work in Lancashire. Regard is given to the traditional barriers which, for over 15 years, have been identified at individual level. Research with those working with young people also identifies and discusses the changes in challenges faced by young people over this time.

This report should inform future commissioning of discretionary funded learning provision for young people in Lancashire, alongside previous Gap Analyses (1, geographical need and 2, risks to provision in Lancashire). The report will also be of interest to providers of core funded learning for 16-18 year olds or those up to 24 with an education, health and care plan. (General and specialist further education colleges, sixth form colleges, school sixth forms, apprenticeships and other work based learning.)

3 Background

Through the National Client Caseload Information System (NCCIS), Local Authorities are required to report on the status of young people with the following characteristics:

- Teen Parents (or if pregnant)
- Young Offenders
- Young People who are in or who have left care
- Substance Misusers
- Refugees/Asylum Seekers
- Special Educational Needs

Young people with characteristics from these vulnerable groups are tracked specifically as historically, they have a lower rate of achievement and successful transition into further learning and work.

However, over time, activities which have addressed some of the barriers faced by young people with these characteristics have resulted in a change in the demographic profile. In addition, other characteristics have emerged which form barriers for young people which are not specifically recorded in the traditional NCCIS dataset.

4 Methods

The findings in this report are from interrogation of existing statistical data and reports and from discussions with practitioners and managers working with young people across Lancashire.

5 Findings - Traditional Characteristics

Teen Parents

Both the number of conceptions and the maternity rate (conceptions resulting in full pregnancy) for all districts of Lancashire, Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen have fallen dramatically between 2005 and 2015 as can be seen in the following table. The number of conceptions to women under 18 in Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire combined reduced from 1310 in 2005 to 683 in 2015 – a reduction of 48%.

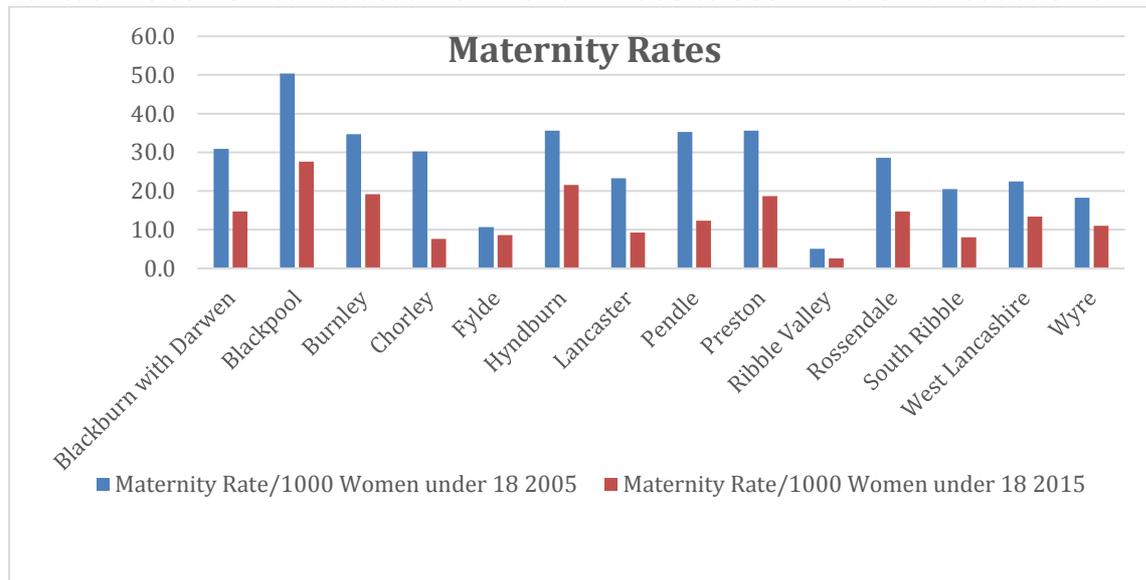


Table 1 – Maternity Rate/1000 Women under 18, comparing 2005 and 2015, by District¹

Following successful outcomes from earlier projects, a specialist provider of courses for parents was contracted to deliver to young parents aged 16-18 as part of the Moving On Project. At 10 months into the project, no participant data had been submitted for this provider. This could indicate that there is little demand for courses aimed at young parents; that lower numbers mean that cohorts of just 16-18 year olds are not viable in local areas; or that those young people are finding suitable learning through mainstream courses and more generic provision.

In addition, there is now well-established financial support for young parents, Care to Learn², which funds childcare and associated travel costs for learners in colleges and school sixth forms.

¹<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/datasets/birthsbyparentscharacteristics>

² <https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn>

Interestingly, the specialist provider has since engaged a number of parents aged 19+ on the Access to Employment Programme, as there is a larger number of parents in the 19-24 year old age group. This may offer a viable support opportunity to a smaller, but still important, number of young parents aged 16-18 in those locations.

Young Offenders

Statistics show a much reduced number of young people in the youth justice system over time. In particular with reference to the young people the Youth Offending Teams within Local Authorities are working with. This reduction is obviously reflected in the number of young people with the characteristic of 'Known to the youth justice system' within NCCIS statistics.

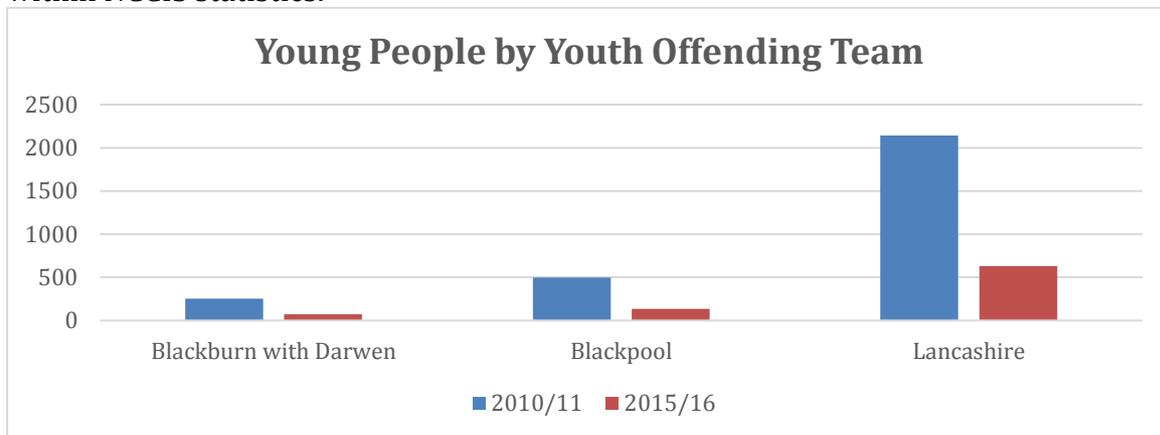


Table 2 – Young People by Youth Offending Team, 2010/11 and 2015/16³

This is in part due to changes brought about by new legislation, the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act, 2012⁴. This means that Youth Offending Teams are not required to provide rehabilitation activity for those with low level offending in the first instance.

There still remains, however, a key issue of attainment for those known to the youth justice system. The table below shows the difference in attainment by type of youth justice disposal for young offenders for 2013.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-justice-statistics-2015-to-2016>

⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/10/section/135>

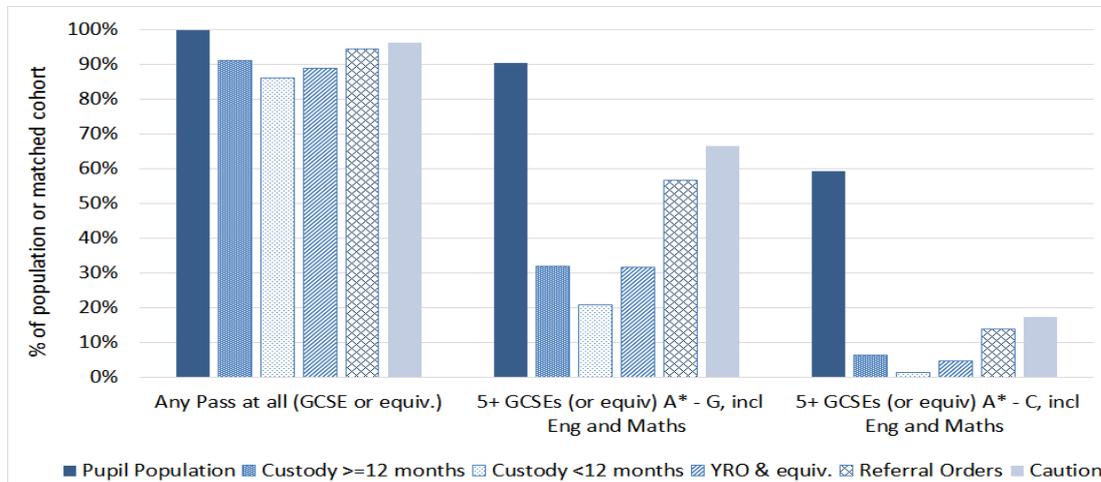


Table 3 - Key Stage 4 Attainment young offender cohort at the end of Key Stage 2012/13⁵

In particular, youth offending services are reporting that there is a need to improve English and maths to help young people access employment. Meaningful work experience with sympathetic employers is also needed to raise confidence and credibility levels. Whilst there was previously a specialist provider operating in the area, NACRO, this organisation has dramatically reduced the number of centres they operate from in recent years, and no longer has a presence. As numbers working with the youth offending teams have reduced, there have been issues of viability for those providing specific courses due to lower referrals and further partnership work is needed to find appropriate solutions.

Young People who are in or who have left the care system

As shown In Table 3, Lancashire's rate for children in care is close to the national average, having risen slightly above more recently. Blackburn with Darwen's rate is above the national average and slightly above the north-west average. Blackpool has a much higher rate – roughly double the north-west and triple the national average. Like the statistic for young people known to the youth offending team, the GCSE results for those who have experienced the care system are well below the national average as shown at table 4. This statistic has not substantially changed over time and one measure which has been put in place to try and address this, is the introduction of the role of Virtual Head within each local authority. This is a senior manager who has the oversight of achievement and progression for these young people in the Local Authority role as 'parent'. Schools also now receive additional funds, the pupil premium, to support children with a range of characteristics, including for those in care.

⁵https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/577542/understanding-educational-background-of-young-offenders-full-report.pdf

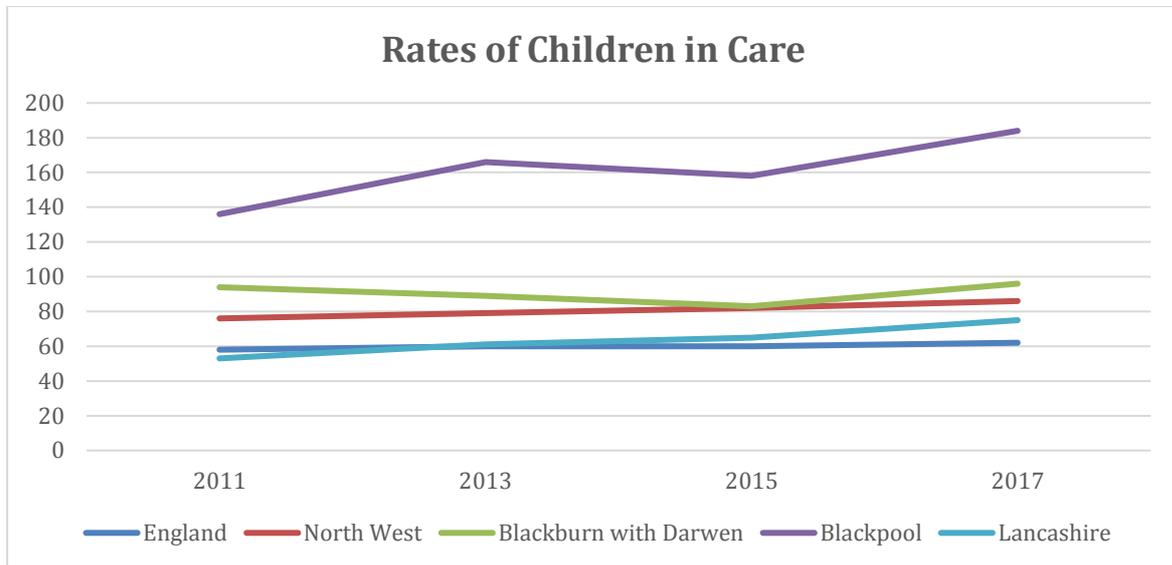


Table 4 - Rates of children in care/10,000 children aged under 18 by Local Authority⁶

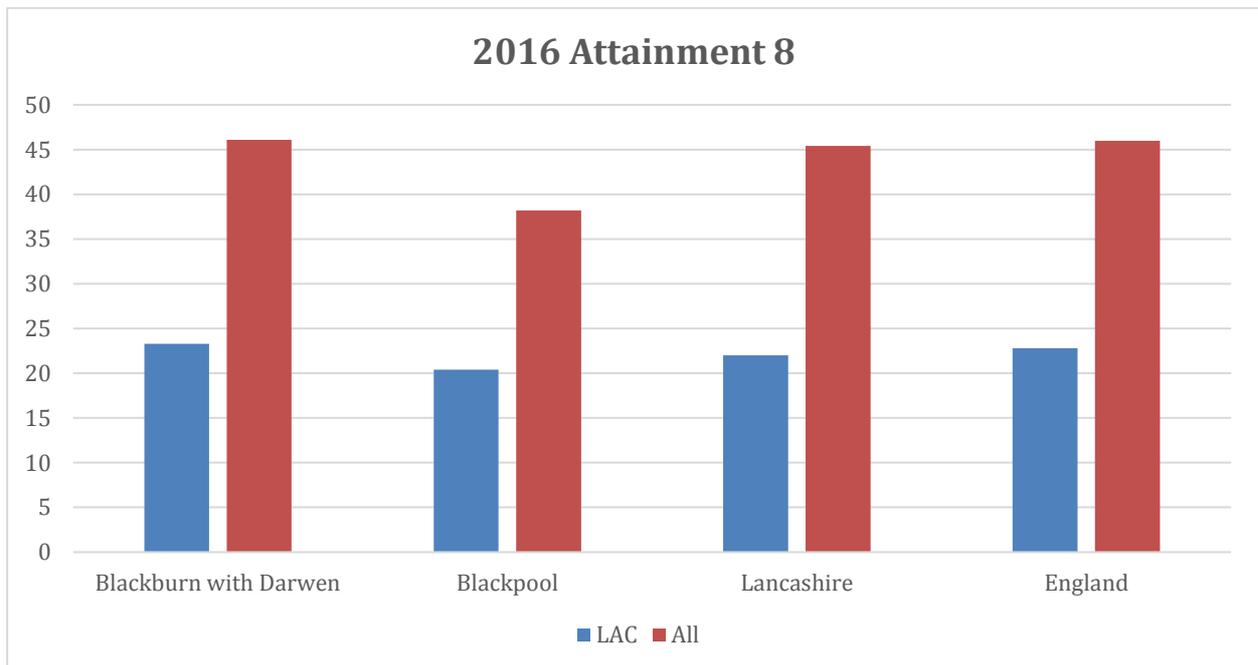


Table 5 - Comparison of Attainment 8 in 2016 for Looked after Children compared with all by Local Authority⁷

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-looked-after-children>

⁷ <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/>

As can be seen from the information above, the rates of children who are looked after have risen recently in all three local authority areas, with Blackpool's being particularly high historically. Blackpool Council are already working with sympathetic employers who have offered work experience placements for looked after children. There is an opportunity for delivery partners to work with the council on this initiative. More generally, work experience and employability skills, including confidence building, along with mentoring/key person support are needed for young people who have been in the care system.

Substance Misuse

The number of young people who are recorded in this category for Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire is very small. Some agencies are reporting increased usage of cannabis, nitrous oxide and the chemical known as 'Spice'. Those who face these barriers also often have multiple disadvantages to deal with, such as housing, health etc. It is therefore important to ensure that the range of provision aimed at reengaging young people in learning includes a broad enough support offer to meet the needs of these young people.

Refugees/Asylum Seekers

In the ten years to 2017, there was an increase of asylum seekers receiving Section 95 support of 51% across Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire, however for all ages, this number is still only 859 across the whole area, of whom, young people aged 16-18 form a small number⁸. Blackburn with Darwen was previously a dispersal area and concentrations have reduced from 525 to 323 asylum seekers over this period, with more widespread distribution across the rest of the area now demonstrated. FE institutions are well aware of the ESFA funding rules for these learners. It is key to ensure that those working with young asylum seekers are aware of flexible learning opportunities for which they may be eligible.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Changes in recent years to the process for identifying and fulfilling the needs of young people with special educational needs and disabilities mean that it is not necessarily appropriate to compare volumes of learners over time, due to differences in recording methods. However, over time, roughly 3% of the population of children and young people in Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire combined have received a Statement of SEN or an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC)⁹.

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-april-to-june-2017/how-many-people-do-we-grant-asylum-or-protection-to>

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england-january-2017>

A greater importance has been given to the articulation of the offer for young people with special educational needs and a Local Offer¹⁰¹¹¹² now must be published by each local authority, giving details of learning opportunities and support available.

A recent addition to the offer is Supported Internship¹³, which is being developed at differing rates across Lancashire. This should offer a high quality work experience over a substantial period of time to young people who could access the workplace with support.

It may be possible to build a pathway to Supported Internship through projects like Moving On, once there is a substantial mainstream offer available.

6 Findings – Emerging Issues

Mental Health

Whilst researching vulnerable characteristics, in discussion with delivery partners of education and training to 16-18 year olds, mental health is now the most prevalent issue for young people. This ranges from low level anxiety to full psychoses with a whole range of conditions in between. The high incidence of mental health conditions amongst the population as a whole has been much reported in recent times. This is being seen across the spectrum of post-16 learning, from those who are not in education, training and employment through to high-flying A-level students.

Referrals to specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) have increased - by 64 per cent over the last two years to 2015 according to the NHS Benchmarking Review (an optional benchmarking system for providers) and highlighted in the State of the Nation report.¹⁴ However the State of the Nation report also states that 23% of young people referred to CAMHS and other specialist services are turned away without treatment or support.

As many of the research discussions focussed on mental health, three case studies have emerged of different developing practices by delivery partners and these are outlined in Appendices to this paper.

¹⁰ <http://search3.openobjects.com/kb5/blackburn/directory/localoffer.page>

¹¹ <https://blackpool.fsd.org.uk/kb5/blackpool/fsd/home.page>

¹² <http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/children-education-families/special-educational-needs-and-disabilities.aspx>

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supported-internships-for-young-people-with-learning-difficulties>

¹⁴ <https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/State-of-the-Nation-report-web.pdf>

The main findings show that the delivery partners are having to put in place a range of support mechanisms for young people with mental health conditions which typically include:

- Increased liaison with mental health services, GPs and emergency services
- Agreements with specialist organisations, such as Samaritans, MIND
- Training on specific issues (such as self-harming)
- Increased counselling services
- Well-being mentors
- Arrangements for extended home-working/tuition
- Commissioning of specialists to support specific issues
- Supervision arrangements for front-line staff
- Themed events around well-being including a range of support agencies
- Bullying and cyber-bullying support
- Support for drug use related mental health issues, eg cannabis, 'Spice'

The Moving On and Access to Employment projects, through their capacity building funding have offered short CPD sessions to the delivery partner network from a range of professional organisations focussing on these issues. This has included Papyrus UK – preventing young suicides; Harm-Ed – understanding self-harming; Bullies Out – understanding and preventing bullying.

There is a definite and immediate need for supporting and building confidence and capacity of all staff working with young people with mental health issues in education and supporting them in the workplace.

Young people with mental health issues need a wide range of learning provision. Some can cope with mainstream learning opportunities with the right support. Some need special arrangements around mainstream learning opportunities, such as greater working from home, or flexible attendance arrangements for tutorials. Others need a more bespoke set of arrangements, such as short courses, or light timetables. The key to all this is the capacity of staff to work with young people with these issues and encourage progression. Where a young person does not have a medical diagnosis it can be difficult to lever in additional resources and this is where discretionary funding may be able to assist in the future.

Estrangement

Young people who are homeless aged 16-18 have always been recorded by local authority services where this is known, and certain organisations, such as the Foyer Federation work with young people to provide a package of housing and training support, with a view to helping young people secure education, training or work and a sustainable tenancy. There has, however long been a shortage of such supported places,

and where young people cannot sustain a place in hostel or foye accommodation, their primary need is always shelter and their condition is not always known and recorded.

More recently, higher education, through HEFCE¹⁵, has had a greater focus on young people who are estranged from parents and therefore are not in receipt of support from them. This does not necessarily result in homelessness, as these young people could be living with other relatives or families of friends. They do not, however, have the full range of support they would have at home - financial, in kind (eg food, heating, clothing, laundry) and emotionally.

This also applies to young people aged 16-18 who have become estranged from parents, but who are not officially homeless, as they have somewhere to stay. FE Colleges are increasingly needing to offer financial and counselling support to these young people to help them overcome the barriers to them remaining in learning. As shelter is such a basic need, the chaotic lifestyle that can ensue from becoming estranged from parents is now recognised as a major vulnerable characteristic.

Increased Poverty

The effects of poverty on education have been recognised through payment of the Pupil Premium to schools for several years now for those in receipt of free school meals, Free school meals is a recognised poverty indicator. In 2015, however, on average across local authorities, 70% of pupils in receipt of free school meals still did not achieve 5 good GCSEs.

A report published in December 2017 by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, UK Poverty 2017, shows that over the last 5 years, child poverty has increased against a long term trend of decline. This puts poverty again in the spotlight in respect of young people's future chances.

The report states:

"In England, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development at age five has increased, but the attainment gap has remained fairly constant at 20 percentage points. The attainment gap remains fairly constant through primary school, meaning that the difference in attainment between those from richer and poorer backgrounds remains around 20 percentage points at age 11. This gap widens through secondary school, to around 28 percentage points by age 16 and 25 percentage points at age 19"¹⁶

Poverty is a contributory factor to some of the other disadvantages discussed in this paper and whilst not normally 'listed' separately, it is relevant to mention it here due to the recent findings above.

¹⁵ http://standalone.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Access-and-Retention.Final_.pdf

¹⁶ <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/uk-poverty-2017>

Multiple disadvantage

Throughout discussion with delivery providers and on reviewing research material, it is evident that the traditional system of recording and addressing one traditional vulnerable characteristic for a young person is too narrow. For example, 48% of young offenders also have a special educational need (SEN) and a higher than average proportion have experienced the care system. Within the care system, a much higher than average proportion have SEN. In addition, delivery partners are recording an increasing number of young people with a dual diagnosis of mental ill-health and SEN.

Earlier projects have all recorded just one vulnerable characteristic in the main statistical profile for the learner. The Moving On project allows for up to 4 of those characteristics to be recorded and delivery partners have been encouraged to do so, in order to help quantify to some extent the issue of multiple disadvantage. After the first year of the project, of 1419 participants, 804 (57%) had at least one disadvantage recorded, of those, 357 (25%) had 2 disadvantages recorded, 147 (10%) had 3 and 43 (3%) had 4. This is an encouraging start to gathering this information, which is, of course dependent on the young person disclosing at the appropriate point of the project. Of the disadvantages recorded, the highest incidence (487) is for emotional/behavioural/mental health issues, which supports the findings above about mental health. The next highest are SEN (182) and family issues (163).

It is clear that the issues facing young people for access, continued participation and achievement in learning and work are increasingly complex and challenging. Provision for learners with these disadvantages needs to be flexible and responsive. Delivery staff are demonstrating a real commitment to adapting and developing their responses to young people but in many cases need support and resources to do so.

7 Conclusions

The findings of this report demonstrate a shift in vulnerable characteristics and how they should be considered in the development of learning provision for young people, particularly for those who are not in education, employment or training.

There is reduction in reported incidence of certain characteristics, which would indicate that less targeted provision is needed, particularly for young parents. On the other hand, the rise in incidence and impact of mental ill-health and estrangement need specific consideration in the design of future provision and wraparound support.

All of this is within the context of rising cases of multiple disadvantage, demonstrating that there is not a 'one size fits all' solution to designing learning provision to meet the needs of young people, engaging, retaining and achieving success.

Whilst multiple disadvantage is often a feature of the lives of young people who have experienced the care system or who are known to youth offending teams, it is important to recognise the endemic lower rates of success in learning and the work environment for these young people.

8 Recommendations

The purpose of this report is to identify the barriers which are hindering young people's progress in learning and work in Lancashire and to inform future commissioning of discretionary funded learning provision for young people in Lancashire, alongside previous Gap Analyses (1, geographical need and 2, risks to provision in Lancashire).

It is therefore recommended that:

- These findings are used by the LEP machinery to help inform the design of future calls for activity for discretionary funding, recognising the role that ESF funded programmes have historically fulfilled in this area.
- These findings are shared with upper tier local authorities (Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire) for consideration alongside their Statement of Priorities for post-16 education and training and their subsequent discussions with the ESFA.
- These findings are shared with professionals working with young people facing the disadvantages featured in this report for further comment and discussion.
- The Lancashire Youth Steering Group should review the report and recommend any action needed for the current or potential future projects in light of the findings and discussions.
- Where appropriate, the findings of the report should be noted in the evaluation of the Moving On Project.
- The findings should be made available as a research document to learning provider networks, for consideration in design of both discretionary and mainstream provision.

Appendix 1a

Mental Health – Delivery Partner Case Studies

Lancashire Fire and Rescue – Prince’s Trust Team Programme

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LF&RS) delivers the Prince’s Trust Team Programme to over 350 young people each year. Over time the issues faced by young people have become more complex with an increasing incidence of mental health issues. To address this, LF&RS have developed a three tier approach to support young people and staff delivering the programme.

The first universal tier involves training for all staff in promoting wellbeing, mental health awareness and recognising potential psychoses.

The second tier increases capacity, working with UCLAN and Lancaster University to host interns from social work bachelors and master’s degree courses. The students bring with them knowledge of a range of issues, awareness of approaches such as CBT and use resources and contacts to address issues such as housing or health. The interns benefit from this live experience and they are supervised by a Practice Educator, a senior consultant social worker retained by LFRS

Where a young person presents in mental health crisis and the interns need professional support to enable them to access acute mental health services, the third tier of the system involves referral of the case to a retained senior consultant social worker. He will assess the case, writing a report to facilitate urgent referral for a young person who typically is at risk of serious harm (to themselves or others). To date, all young people referred through this system have received urgent, appropriate support from the relevant statutory services.

This three part system gives confidence to the front line workers both by increasing their knowledge and skills and by reassurance that there are other tiers of support. This has allowed them to enrol young people on the programme who might otherwise not have had the opportunity to join a course.

Appendix 1b

Mental Health – Delivery Partner Case Studies

Burnley College

Over recent years it has become apparent that many young people who need support to stay in learning post-16 require help with a range of issues from confidence/resilience building and addressing anxiety through to better identification and diagnosis of conditions such as Asperger's Syndrome and autism. In response, Burnley College has developed the Choices programme to address these needs.

The team works with young people who are planning to start at college in September over the preceding months to identify their support needs and, where appropriate, put steps in place, such as assessment by an educational psychologist, to gain an education, health and care plan for them. There has been a marked increase in the number of young people who have a dual diagnosis of low level mental ill-health and learning difficulties or disabilities.

In addition, young people who have started courses with the different divisions of the college and then face issues coping with the transition, such as low level mental health issues, are referred internally to the Foundation and Community Studies team. The team devises a programme for the individual which means they are successfully retained in college, but with appropriate support and suitable learning.

Part of the offer allows young people to integrate with different vocational areas of the college up to and including higher level study, whilst undertaking, for example, an employability qualification on their Choices programme. This enables young people to experience the vocational area of their choosing, progress onto substantial learning in the next year, whilst removing the 'risk' factor of potential non-achievement for the vocational area itself. This approach encourages vocational leads to include these young people in their areas with full support.

Development of staff knowledge and skills in working with young people with this range of issues has benefitted the whole college, as there is now a resource of expertise for all staff to access.

Appendix 1c

Mental Health – Delivery Partner Case Studies

Blackpool & The Fylde College

The "Mental Wealth" agenda is key to the working of Blackpool & the Fylde College. The college approach is to mainstream awareness and activity to support resilience and good mental health. A substantial resource is invested in building the resilience of staff and students. Whilst a central team of counsellors (male and female), mental health specialists and well-being managers have a core expertise for the whole college, there is availability for all staff to be trained in resilience techniques to support their own practice.

Blackpool & The Fylde College works closely with multiple partners in the area and nationally who are involved in this field. In particular, there is the HeadStart project with Blackpool Council. HeadStart is a multi-agency programme aiming to increase resilience in young people and improve mental wellbeing. A further example is the Catalyst project with HEFCE, supporting positive wellbeing and resilience for victims and preventative strategies for those vulnerable to hate crimes and various forms of abuse.

The college is investing in a train the trainer course for three of the team to be able to deliver Mental Health First Aid training to all staff on an ongoing basis. This will ensure a mainstreaming of this work, rather than a one-off focus. Different wellbeing themes run throughout the year, currently the focus is 'Resilience'.

One aspect is 'Resilience through Sport'. Themed activities are being held to raise the awareness of how physical activity can support mental wellbeing. Curriculum areas, employability coaches and wider support staff engage with the students through these themes.

An online assessment is being trialled to gauge resilience of students on entry to the College. This is being run through tutorials and will identify students who may be in need of support to sustain their learning. Results of this approach will be known later in 2018.