

Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee

Meeting:	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Date:	15 April, 2021
Title:	Delivering the Youth Engagement and Development Framework in Gwynedd
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Member:	Councillor Cemlyn Rees Williams, Cabinet Member for Education

1. WHY DOES IT NEED TO BE SCRUTINISED?

- 1.1. The Welsh Government introduced the Youth Engagement and Development Framework in 2013. Local Authorities are responsible for providing strategic leadership for implementing the framework locally. (**Appendix 1**)
- 1.2. The Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider whether our arrangements and provisions are sufficient to support young people who are at risk of disengaging from education or who have disengaged from education, training or employment.

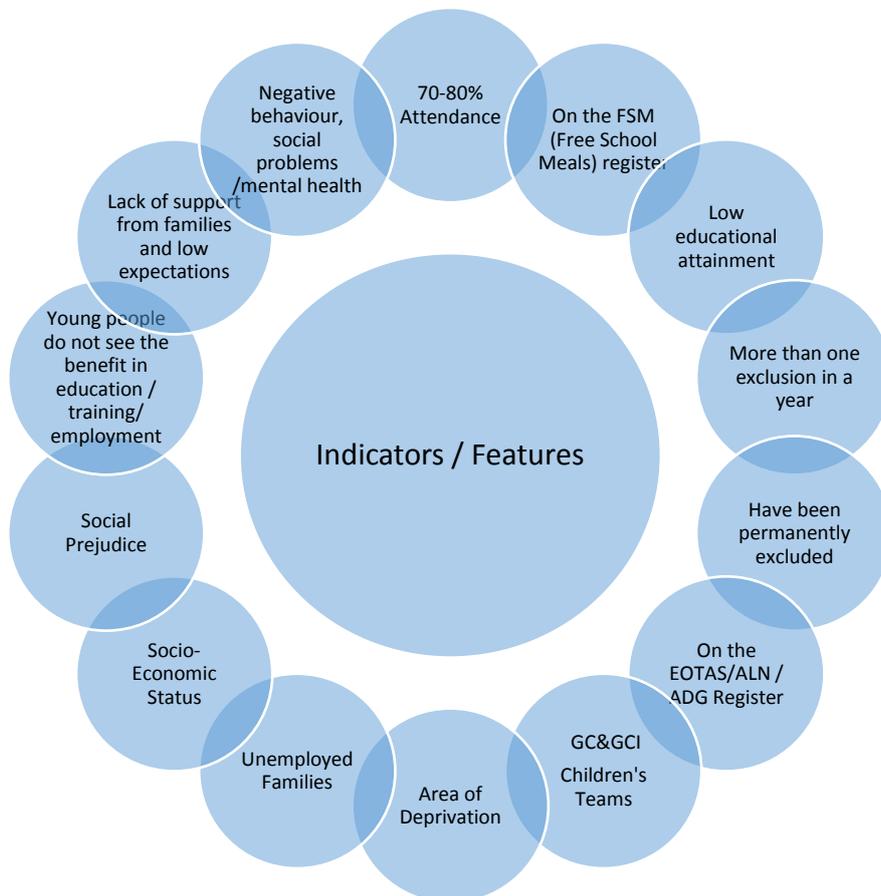
2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 2.1. The Youth Engagement and Development Framework (The Framework) was published in 2013, as a framework that sets out the Welsh Government's strategy to reduce the number of young people between 11 and 25 years old who are not in employment, education or training (NEET). The Welsh Government sets out core standards and expectations, and Local Authorities are responsible for providing strategic leadership to implement the Framework locally. A Management Group has been established in Gwynedd that sets out the local vision for the framework.
- 2.2. The Framework comprises of six key elements:
 - Identifying the young people who are most likely to fall out of education
 - Providing better brokerage and liaison in relation to support
 - Stronger tracking and transition processes throughout the system for young people
 - Ensuring that the provision meets the needs of young people
 - Reinforcing employability skills and opportunities for employment
 - Improving accountability to deliver better outcomes for young people.
- 2.3 A range of services and projects are in Gwynedd that contribute towards supporting young people who are at risk of dropping out of education, or who are not in education, training or work. Examples of these services include the Youth Justice Service; Children and Supporting Families Service; Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Service and the Youth Service.
- 2.4 Some of the specific projects that have received funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) to support efforts to reduce the number of people who are not in education, training or work include TRAC (funding ends July 2022), ADTRAC (funding ends May 2021) and Communities for Work (funding ends June 2022).

TRAC	ADTRAC
Led by the Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Service within the Education Department	Led by the Youth Service
The total value of the scheme is £4.6M (£3.3M of ESF funding).	The total value of the scheme is £1.6M (£1.1M of ESF funding).
Seeks to support 1,200 children and young people before the project ends.	Seeks to support 301 young people before the project ends.

3 FACTORS THAT CAN CAUSE YOUNG PEOPLE TO DISENGAGE FROM EDUCATION, TRAINING OR WORK (Appendix 2)

3.1 There is a vast range of research that recognises the key indicators and features of individuals who are at risk of disengagement. See below:



3.2 Young people aged 16+ experience a wide range of obstacles that prevent them from accessing education, training or work. The most common obstacles are lack of confidence, transport

problems, lack of experience/employability and no qualifications. In addition, 47% of ADTRAC participants stated mental health concerns as an obstacle, which prevented their engagement. See (**Appendix 3**)"Persons", namely examples that illustrate the key indicators and features of individuals who have obstacles and who have received support under the framework.

3.3 The effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic are far-reaching, but there are disproportionate effects on:

- Young people not in education, training or employment
- Young people who were already at risk of not being in education, training or employment
- Learners who are vulnerable to harm
- Those who are excluded from the digital world
- Those with low levels of skills

3.4 An increase is seen in the families who experience hardship and poverty with the loss of employment / reduction in working hours; there is an increase in the number of pupils on the elective home education register; concerns regarding returning to a system of engaging with education, especially for those learners with attendance and welfare challenges prior to lockdown. The pandemic has distanced a high number of these individuals from their education. There is a significant increase in the number of Year 11 pupils this academic year who are at risk of not transitioning successfully to further education, training or employment

3.5 The Pandemic has affected young people's employment paths e.g. fewer opportunities to commence on Traineeships, Apprenticeships and work placements; learners on employment programmes are not able to move into permanent employment; a number of the sectors that employ Young People have been closed for prolonged periods e.g. Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure and Retail. More young people need support with unemployment, homelessness and health and emotional well-being. There is an increase in GP mental health referrals for young people and more young people are suffering from loneliness, which could lead to an increase in the number of young people who are vulnerable to harm.

4 WHAT IS THE DEMAND?

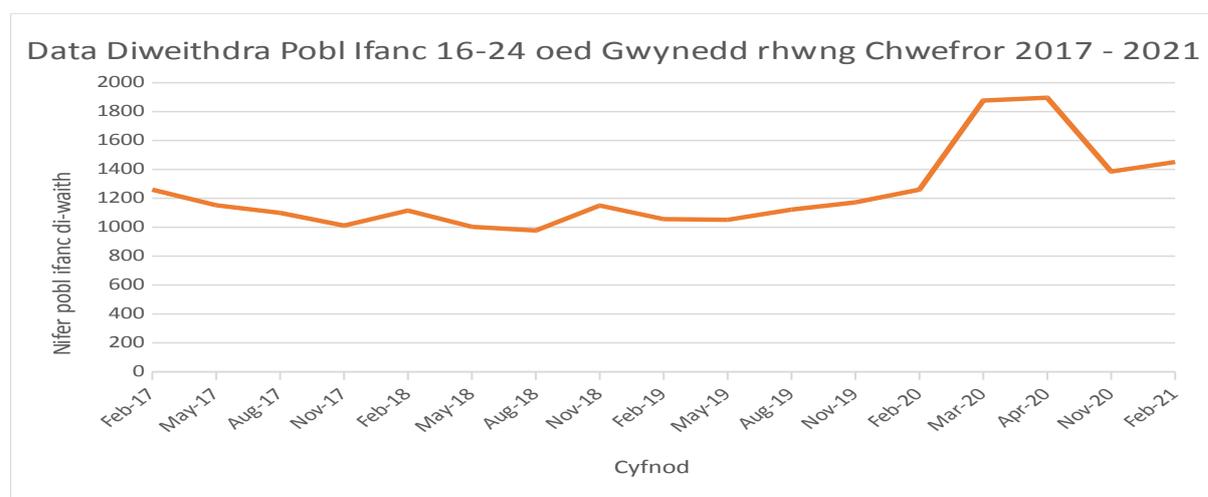
Our current arrangements through the TRAC project identify on average 1,000 Yr7-11 pupils who require additional support to prevent them from dis engaging with their education. The TRAC project is not able to support them all, and it leads on undertaking mapping work with other agencies to identify the appropriate intervention and support.

78 learners from year 6 have been referred to the TRAC project since September 2020, in order to support their transition to Secondary School. The number of referrals from the primary sector has increased since last year, and there is no doubt as to the complexity of these referrals and that they are at substantial risk of not succeeding in the Secondary sector without additional support.

4.1 The percentage of Year 11 School Leavers who do not transition to education, training or employment has been falling between 2015 and 2017; however, between 2018 and 2019 the

percentage saw a slight increase. We anticipate that the effects of the Pandemic will send the numbers higher this year.

- 4.2 The number of 16-25 year olds not in education, training or employment has been relatively stable in Gwynedd over the last three years. Before COVID-19, between 6 and 7% of the 16-24 year old population was not in education, training or employment. A significant increase in unemployment was seen following the first lockdown in March 2020 with the percentage of the 16-24 year old population who were NEET increasing to 10% in August 2020 (nearly 1,900 young people). The number fell by November; however, recent figures show that the numbers are increasing once more. **(Appendix 4)**



- 4.4 The Pandemic has had the greatest impact on unemployment levels among people aged under 35 years old **but** there is a disproportionate impact on 16-24 year olds as this group does not possess as many skills and experiences to compete for jobs when compared with other population groups. We also know that the 16-24 year olds group is more likely to be on the furlough scheme, but we are yet to find out the scale of the impact on unemployment when the scheme ends in September 2021.

5 GAPS IN PROVISION AFTER THE ESF FUNDING PERIOD

- 5.1 TRAC and ADTRAC have brought additional capacity to Gwynedd to support efforts to reduce the number of young people who are NEET or who are at risk of becoming NEET. Specifically, TRAC which leads a process of identifying young people who are most likely to drop out of education The provision of 'lead workers' across both projects has assisted in contributing towards improved brokerage and coordination of support for young people. The projects are well established and lead on identifying Year 11 School Leavers who are at risk of not moving on to further education, training or employment and are able to transition them to post-16 support. The training framework of both projects has enabled young people to gain access to training opportunities that have are tailored to improve their personal development and employability skills.

5.2 Mental health and well-being support and tailored / dedicated support included within TRAC and ADTRAC provision are unique aspects and they fill the gap in local support for low and medium level well-being / mental health needs that prevent young people from engaging successfully with education, training or employment.

6 FORWARD PLANNING

6.1 The ADTRAC project since the end of March 2021 has finished supporting 16-24 year old Young People. The 16-25 Youth Support Team has been restructured to respond to changes in Young People's needs and to funding resources. Four Youth Support Lead Workers will be available to support 16-25 year olds who are farthest from the labour market and who are facing complex obstacles to engage back with education, training or work. There will be a focus on nurturing positive relationships; social, emotional and personal development of the young person; emotional well-being and good mental health, in order to prepare them to progress to their next step in employment, training and education or other opportunities. **(Appendix 5)**

6.2 With TRAC ending in the near future, there will be a focus on creating an exit strategy and a legacy for a succession model, which the education department might wish to adopt. There is also a need to consider that when it ends that it would have been operational for 6 years and is it therefore a project or a service. This will lead the work programme on a strategic level over the coming months to identify the adaptations that will be needed should the Education Department wish to continue with such interventions. It is anticipated that an interim report will be ready to share in the autumn term at the latest.

7 RISKS (Appendix 6)

7.1 It is anticipated that the demand will increase for support and interventions for young people who are at risk or who are disengaged from education, training or employment. Within the next 15 months, TRAC, ADTRAC and Communities for Work programmes will end. Withdrawing these projects raises concerns about the gaps that will become evident in relation to the provision that is available to support young people in Gwynedd.

7.2 The obstacles that prevent young people from engaging with education, training and employment are complex, and there are concerns whether employability solutions are suitable to address obstacles such as transport and emotional and social challenges.

7.3 There is concern amongst Partners that losing the funding for TRAC and ADTRAC would lead to losing mental health and well-being support for young people where their progress to Education, training or employment is limited by poor mental health and well-being.