

Meeting of:	<b>Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Monday, 07 October 2024</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Learning and Culture
Report Title:	Youth Engagement and Progression Update
Purpose of Report:	To make members aware of the progress made since January 2024 in relation to the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework and the current levels of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)
Report Owner:	Elizabeth Jones, Director of Learning and Skills
Responsible Officer:	Peter Williams, Youth Engagement Senior Officer
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Cllr Rhiannon Birch, Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language Morwen Hudson, Head of Standards and Provision Martin Dacey, Lead Officer for Social Inclusion Rhys Jones, Youth Engagement Manager
Policy Framework:	The recommendations of this report are within existing policy framework and budget
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This report is to make members aware of the percentage of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in the Vale of Glamorgan (VoG) Local Authority (LA) in 2023/2024. This includes updates in relation to the NEETs and homelessness prevention agendas from Welsh Government and the work being undertaken locally within the Vale of Glamorgan.</li> <li>- The report consists of annual destination data of school leavers conducted by Careers Wales on behalf of Welsh Government in October 2023, with the statistical report for the destination survey being released in April 2024.</li> <li>- The data highlights that the level of young people classified as NEET has reduced in National Curriculum Year (NCY) 11 by 0.29%, whereas in NCY 12 and 13, the figures had increased by 0.36% and 0.74% respectively. The LA remains below the Welsh average for NCY 11 and 13, which saw a decrease of 0.05% for NCY 11 and a comparable increase of 0.75%. The Vale is above the Welsh average for NCY 12 this year, which has been influenced by the increase in the number of local authorities with low numbers of NEET young people leaving year 12 compared to previous years. Locally this is reflective of a slightly higher number than previous years of those leaving year 12 without returning to year 13.</li> </ul>	

- Year 11 young people classified as NEET across the LA was 1.20%, below the Welsh average of 2.00%.
- Year 12 young people classified as NEET across the LA was 0.60%, below the Welsh average of 0.50%.
- Year 13 young people classified as NEET across the LA was 3.20%, below the Welsh average of 3.60%.
- Careers Wales noted in the 2023 data that across Wales, 2.00% of the combined year 11, 12 and 13 cohorts were known to be NEET. It was also noted that across Wales, there has been an increase of 0.70% for year 13 leavers who are leaving as not available for education, employment or training. This is reflected locally within the Vale's figures, where we have seen an increase of 0.75% for this cohort.
- In February and March 2024, Estyn inspections were undertaken within both the Youth Service and across the Local Government Education Service (LGES) more generally. The NEETs prevention agenda featured within both inspections, and positive feedback was received, particularly in relation to the excellent quality of internal and external partners to target groups of young people.
- Highlighting of the current financial risks for future provision and staffing beyond March 2025, when current grant funding through Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) and the Welsh Government Youth Support Grant (YSG) are due to end or be reviewed.

## Recommendations

1. That Members consider the progress made in the last eight months of the continued implementation of the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF) to reduce the number of young people classified as NEET in the Vale of Glamorgan, along with the prevention of young people becoming homeless.
2. That Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee receives a further progress update report in July 2025, moving the annual feedback to a more pertinent time in the annual cycle as this is a timelier update following the official destination release in April each year.

## Reasons for Recommendations

1. The Local Authority (LA) has a strategic responsibility for implementing the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF) to reduce the number of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training and supporting young people at risk of becoming homeless.
2. That the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee has continued oversight of the YEPF.

## 1. Background

- 1.1 The YEPF has been in place since 2013 and has been the focus and guide of NEETs prevention support across Wales. In 2022, Welsh Government undertook a review of the YEPF and published updated documents in September 2022. The key change was the alteration of the age range from 11 to 18 years old, with the Young Person's Guarantee (YPG) operating alongside for those aged 16 to 24 years old, as well as incorporating homelessness prevention support as part of the YEPF.
- 1.2 The current national [milestone](#), as part of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and put in place by Welsh Government for the YEPF and YPG, is that at least 90% of 16 to 24 year olds are in education, employment or training by 2050.
- 1.3 This report seeks to make Elected Members aware of the progress made in the Vale of Glamorgan in respect of reducing NEETs, the milestones achieved, and work undertaken to support those at risk of becoming homeless.

## 2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 The Welsh Government official statistical data on NEETs for 2023 was released in April 2024. The annual survey of school leavers undertaken by Careers Wales in

October of each year, on behalf of the Welsh Government, provides a snapshot of pupil destinations. It includes pupils in year 11 who have reached statutory school leaving age and pupils leaving school in years 12 and 13. Overall, the data outlines a generally positive trend, in line with the Welsh average. The LA has seen a reduction in the percentage in NCY 11, a comparable increase in NCY 13, and a percentage increase of NEET young people in NCY 12.

- 2.2** The percentage of Year 11 leavers who were NEET decreased from 1.49% in 2022 to 1.20% (20 young people) in 2023, below the Welsh average of 2.00% and the LA was ranked second in Wales.
- 2.3** The percentage of young people classified as NEET upon leaving year 12 in 2023 was 0.60% (five young people), an increase from 0.24% in 2022, with the LA ranked 14<sup>th</sup> in Wales. Although this appears to be a significant increase, the number of individual young people has increased by three since 2022.
- 2.4** The percentage of year 13 leavers who became NEET in 2023 was 3.20% (24 young people), increasing from 2.46% in 2022, with the LA ranked 10<sup>th</sup> in Wales.
- 2.5** The Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) delivery model has continued to operate within the STRIVE project. This is combined the pre-16 NEETs and homelessness prevention support and sits along with the 16-18 NEETs tracking. This funding, alongside the Welsh Government Youth Support Grant (YSG) is confirmed to continue until 31/03/2025. Reporting is undertaken quarterly for SPF and six monthly for the YSG, which allows the service to demonstrate its impact to young people using pre-determined outputs and outcomes.
- 2.6** The STRIVE SPF outputs are for the numbers of young people supported to access basic skills support; young people supported to access life skills support; and young people supported to gain a qualification. From the six quarters completed to-date, the enrolment outputs have progressed well, with the combined percentage achieved against the profiled targets being 113%. These percentages equate to over 268 young people being supported as part of STRIVE's NEET prevention support in this period.
- 2.7** The STRIVE SPF outcomes are the number of young people engaged in life skills support following interventions and the number of young people who have achieved a recognised qualification. Progress is being made following the delayed start for claiming outcomes as discussed in the last report. To-date, the project has achieved 69% and 40% against target, with clear plans in place for the remainder of the project to meet these targets. Within STRIVE, the main qualifications being delivered are through Agored Cymru, in partnership with Adult Community Learning, SWEET BTEC qualifications, and one-day vocational training such as first aid.
- 2.8** Within the homelessness prevention strand of STRIVE, a total of 44 young people were supported in 2023/2024. Specific programmes of supporting young people who are at risk of becoming homeless continue to run. This includes the successful Family Ties programme that encourages families to spend quality time together, as well as a new Life Skills project, which has supported around 10 young people with basic skills, such as budgeting and cooking simple meals. As

part of this, accredited learning opportunities are built into programmes to increase the benefit of the offer to young people.

- 2.9** The LA's Communities for Work Plus (CFW+) team, have had a significant reduction in their budget for 2024/2025 and because of this, project eligibility was changed by Welsh Government. CFW+ can now only support individuals who are 20 or over and have complex barriers to employment. These barriers can include being from global majority, lone parents, women, being aged between 20-24, being aged over 50, being low skilled or those with a disability or health condition. Since January 2024, CFW+ have engaged with 53 young people aged 16-24 and have supported 26 of these into employment.
- 2.10** The CFW+ Employment Mentors are active in communities across the Vale of Glamorgan, including the POD, libraries, The Gathering Place, community centres and food banks. Work has also been done with local partners and training providers to upskill individuals. Examples of this are employability sessions delivered by Adult Community Learning, teaching assistant courses delivered by Adult Learning Wales, funding CSCS construction cards and SIA security licences through local training providers. Within the CFW+ team, there is a dedicated Employer Liaison Officer, who works closely with employers to source and secure opportunities for individuals enrolled on the CFW+ programme.
- 2.11** With the changes to the funding for CFW+ and Celt+, Shared Prosperity Fund has taken over in supporting young people aged between 16 and 19. They also support individuals through community settings, outreach locations across the rural Vale and hosting of the Pod provision in Barry, which provides wraparound services for individuals to support their progression and address barriers to engagement.
- 2.12** Celt+ have funded a round of QuickStart positions to support young people aged 18-24 into employment opportunities within the LA. CFW+ supported with this round of the scheme again, due to its success in previous years and the ages of their cohort. As part of this, work was undertaken with participants on this scheme to assist them in applying for the roles. The scheme has been very successful again this year, with 11 vacancies being made available. As a result of these opportunities, all 11 individuals completed their placements, with 9 of these securing fixed term roles either within the Council or with outside organisations.
- 2.13** Celt+ have also supported parents within local schools, introducing them to the support that is on offer, in partnership with the Vale's Family Information Service. These sessions were focussed on addressing common parenting challenges such as dealing with behavioural issues in the home, Internet safety and mental health. Tailored job clubs have been setup in partnership with the local job centre for different age groups and a supported volunteering scheme has been setup with Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS), which has seen 44 individuals being referred to or approaching GVS directly, and 25 being successfully placed in volunteering roles within the Vale of Glamorgan.
- 2.14** Following positive feedback from schools on becoming more involved in supporting young people to identify positive destinations at an earlier stage, a

series of roadshows were organised in schools to promote opportunities to year 11 and 13 leavers. This ran around February half-term and included the use of the Youth Service VPOD provision, along with partners such as Careers Wales, Cardiff and Vale College (CAVC) and Llamau. During this time, young people had the opportunity to explore their post-education plans and look for additional support if required. Unfortunately, only two schools, Cowbridge and Pencoedtre, took up the opportunity, however over the two days in these schools, a total of 161 young people accessed the provision for support. As a result of this, CAVC identified around 10 young people who had not planned to go to college prior to the roadshow, but later that day, attended a college open evening for more information on courses.

- 2.15** Additional support will be provided to sixth forms this year to support year 12 cohorts to identify those who may not continue to year 13. This follows successful examples where Pencoedtre High School have informed the LA of learners who have left mid-year during 6<sup>th</sup> form. Once notified, the LA contacts the learner to look at progression at an earlier stage rather than waiting until the name is identified through Pupil Destinations which could potentially be 11 months from the point of disengagement.
- 2.16** The Youth Service has now embedded the use of Microsoft Forms to support data collection for potential NEET young people. This has been a successful way to increase engagement with young people, as well as reduce the time and distance staff travel that is undertaken in doing home visits, which is having a positive impact on the LA's Project Zero initiative. This continues to form part of a wider digital information offer, which is being hosted on the LA's external website under the title of [Post-16 Choices](#) with the aim of removing barriers to support or accessing information.
- 2.17** As part of the YEPF, the LA is required to have an early identification tool (EIT) in place to help identify young people at risk of becoming NEET or homeless. The EIT has been part of the YEPF since its inception to identify those at risk of becoming NEET, with the YEPF review combining that with identifying those at risk of youth homelessness. Following the last update to Scrutiny, the use of the EIT has continued to be part of the screening for referrals into the STRIVE project, along with it being used as a distance travelled measurement to demonstrate impact. Further work is continuing to identify trends in datasets in relation to homelessness prevention, however this is an ongoing piece of work that will involve interrogating datasets from other departments such as housing. Initial findings from this identifies similar indicators and barriers across both NEETs and homelessness prevention work. The largest number of referrals received for homelessness prevention is due to family breakdown and no-fault evictions with clear needs to support the young person's transition through this period.
- 2.18** Estyn has now undertaken and published its [review](#) of the lead worker role within NEETs prevention. With this report being published in July, there were some recommendations that are currently being explored as to their feasibility within the Vale of Glamorgan. One recommendation relates to the continuity of a Lead Worker for an individual to be in place until the 31<sup>st</sup> January after they

have left education. This would be a challenge based on the staffing capacity and funding requirements for the posts, but looking at a more informal model of implementing this in practice could be considered as a local needs-based adjustment.

- 2.19** Through discussions with Welsh Government colleagues, following the review of the YEPF to now include youth homelessness prevention, an opportunity for the Vale of Glamorgan to share good practice across Wales became possible. During a joint Engagement Progression Coordinator (EPC) and Youth Homelessness Coordinator (YHC) meeting in mid-Wales, the LA was able to present a piece of good practice from its integration of a combined NEETs and homelessness prevention programme. During the presentation and further discussions, the examples used about a common approach, consistent referral pathway and use of outcomes to evidence has been praised as an example of good practice that other authorities may want to consider exploring.
- 2.20** The Youth Engagement and Progression Strategic Board, chaired by the Head of Provision and Standards, continue to meet quarterly. The Board is made up of both internal and external stakeholders working across both pre-16 and post-16 sectors. The group analyses the NEETs data trends, monitors performance, and provides strategic direction in addressing the NEETs agenda accordingly. The board's Terms of Reference are reviewed annually to ensure appropriacy.
- 2.21** Lead Worker Meetings, with key education and training providers, take place monthly, to ensure up to date NEETs data is considered. Offers and updates of provision are discussed and can be adapted to ensure flexibility to cater for young people at risk of becoming NEET. During the summer and autumn months, the key focus is to engage young people, ensuring they are enrolled onto appropriate courses and learning pathways. As part of this, the group is regularly looking at ways in which they can work together to increase promotion of services. This ties in with the run up to the destination survey at the end of October each year. The Post-16 and Seren Advisor meet with the local Working Wales manager on a weekly basis to look at tier 3 NEETs data and to consider which progression routes are provided to support these individuals. Updates on young people's destinations or current engagement in education, employment or training is shared with Careers Wales, as part of the data sharing protocols that are in place. To ensure that data sharing is not impacted, a review of the LA's Welsh Accord for Sharing of Personal Information (WASPI) and data sharing protocols are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure the correct partners are included from across the Vale of Glamorgan.
- 2.22** The Service took part in the first Youth and LGES joint Estyn inspection across Wales following the release of the new Inspection Framework for Youth Services. This is the first time in 18 years that Youth Services have been inspected as a separate entity within the LA. As part of the Youth Service [report](#) (pg. 11), the inspection team gave positive feedback that demonstrated the strength of local partnerships with internal and external agencies, ensuring effective data sharing is in place to best support individual young people. Within the LGES inspection [report](#) (pg. 9-10), the strength of these partnerships and joint working models

was commented on, with a Cameo being included in relation to the collaborative working within the STRIVE team.

### **3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?**

- 3.1** Reducing the percentage of young people from becoming NEET is set out in the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework and the Welsh Government Child Poverty Strategy. It helps support the national milestone and local indicator of increasing the percentage of young people in education, employment, or training, under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- 3.2** The LA's Corporate Plan 2020-2025 'working together for a brighter future' demonstrates a direct link with Objective 2 'to support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth', with specific actions set out to "ensure there is appropriate access to quality early years, nursery and education provision enabling people to achieve their best possible outcome whatever their age". In addition the plan outlines that the LA should to "work with education, training business and other agencies to provide a range of advice, support and training opportunities which improve people's skills in readiness for work" and "work as part of Cardiff Capital Region to progress strategic planning in transport, initiatives and promote sustainable economic growth and employment".
- 3.3** Alongside this, Objective 3 'Support people at home and in their community' specifically highlights the need for support to prevent homelessness and working with partners to support areas of need identified for young people and families, which could impact their growth, development and wellbeing.
- 3.4** The variety of provision continues to develop with a wide range of offers from alternative education providers, vocational learning with progression routes, tailored support, and information and guidance. This supports learners to explore their interests and realise their potential.
- 3.5** We work collaboratively with internal and external partners that include agencies, education and training providers, Careers Wales and Welsh Government to help meet the well-being objective. This collaborative approach to identifying and supporting those at risk aims to act as a preventative measure to young people leaving education with low aspirations or future opportunities to progress to sustainable education, employment, or training.

### **4. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

- 4.1** Climate change and nature implications affect young people accessing employment or education. The Corporate Plan 2020-2025 Objectives including 'to support learning, employment, and sustainable economic growth, is relevant to the work in relation to climate change and economical use of natural resources.



- 4.2 Throughout the work of officers within this area, most meetings with partners, stakeholders and internal staff are held over Microsoft Teams to help minimise transport between meeting locations.
- 4.3 By using digital management of information systems within the Council, we have moved more towards a paperless service. To support this work and the implementation of Microsoft Forms as a method of data collection as discussed, a data protection impact assessment was reviewed to ensure this was processed responsibly. Through this, and the resulting reduction in door knocking these individuals, there is a reduction in the carbon footprint of those officers involved.
- 4.4 With the implementation of the wider electric pool car strategies from the Council, it is expected that these will continue to be used, along with carpooling with other staff when available to attend face-to-face meetings.

## **5. Resources and Legal Considerations**

### **Financial**

- 5.1 The Welsh Government Youth Engagement & Progression Framework (YEPF) is part of the Youth Support Grant of £477,302, of which £63,612, is assigned to the work of the YEPF, including provision to challenge NEETs, and £164,876 is assigned to youth homelessness prevention staffing and provision. Welsh Government have confirmed that the current grant will be in place to March 2025, with a current pan-Wales funding review being undertaken.
- 5.2 For the current financial year, 2024/2025, the amount of SPF grant being received for the Youth Service pre-16 NEETs provision is £263,500. In addition to the SPF grant, £73,024 is funded through the Youth Service's core budget.
- 5.3 With the current uncertainty in grant funding from April 2025 onwards, there is a high risk of pre-16 NEETs and youth homelessness prevention funding ceasing within the next six months. Due to a lack of confirmation on future funding sources post SPF, a significant proportion of support could be impacted if this or a similar funding structure did not continue. With the current Welsh Government grant review being undertaken, there is no clear identification if the NEETs and homelessness prevention agendas will feature in future workplans. As a result, less support will be made available to young people, which will impact their opportunities for supported progression into positive destinations.

### **Employment**

- 5.4 Supporting the YEPF, the Youth Service uses core funding to cover the EPC role within the Council, also 1.4 (FTE) of youth worker positions. In addition, Welsh Government grant funding is used to support the costs and the work plan for both the Post-16 & Seren Advisor role (0.27 FTE), the Post-16 Learning Coach position (1 FTE) and the 4 (FTE) youth homelessness prevention positions. As

discussed in the report, SPF funding is used to offset the staffing costs of to the amount of £263,500 for 6.6 (FTE), this creates greater risk with around 83% of staffing coming from grant funding. This represents a significant shift to the service being heavily reliant on grant funding over time.

### **Legal (Including Equalities)**

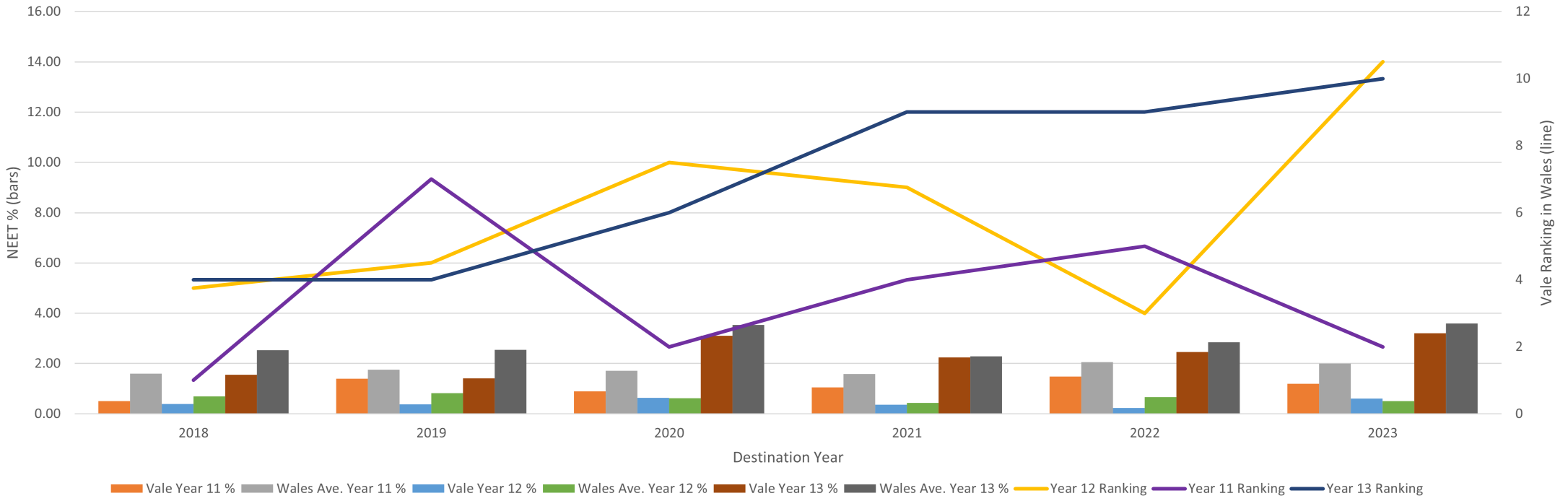
- 5.5** The Engagement and Progression Framework supports the early identification of pupils at risk of becoming NEET and enables support to be put in place to ensure equality of access to education, training, and employment opportunities regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation.

## **6. Background Papers**

- 6.1** Vale of Glamorgan Destination and Tier Tracking (Appendix A)
- 6.2** Welsh Government Guidance: Youth Engagement and Progression Framework: Overview, available at: [Youth Engagement and Progression Framework: Overview \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)
- 6.3** Welsh Government Guidance: Youth Engagement and Progression Framework: Handbook, available at: [Youth Engagement and Progression Framework: Handbook \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

### Destination Data: Vale of Glamorgan Welsh Ranking, NEET % and Welsh Average NEET %

Appendix A



### Vale of Glamorgan Tiers 1, 2 and 3 Tracking, incl. NEET Average

#### Tier Definitions:

Tier 1 - Unknown NEET

Tier 2 - NEET with barriers

Tier 3 - NEET without barriers

