

North Tyneside Council Report to Council Date: 14 March 2013

ITEM 14

Title: University
Applications

Portfolio(s): Children, Young People and Learning

Cabinet Member(s): Councillor David Lilly

Report from Directorate: Children, Young People and Learning

Report Author: Jean Griffiths, Head of Schools, Learning and Skills

Tel: 0191 643 8782

Wards affected: All

PART 1

1.1 Purpose:

As a result of a Council motion on 29 November 2012, Council requested that a report be submitted to full Council explaining the circumstances which have led to a reduction of the number of young people from North Tyneside applying for university places.

1.2 Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Council note the contents of the report.

1.3 Forward plan:

This matter is included on the Forward Plan for the period 23 January – 31 May 2013.

1.4 Council plan and policy framework:

The report relates to Priority 2 of the Council Strategic Plan 2012 – 2015: Maintaining excellent education, training and employment opportunities, including apprenticeships and working in collaboration with partners.

The report relates to Priority 3 of the Sustainable Communities Strategy 2010 - 2013: Best Start in Life.

1.5 Information:

1.5.1 Background

On 11th November 2012, an article was published in the Observer newspaper entitled: Middle Class pupils shun universities as fees rise. In the article North Tyneside was identified in the following statement: ‘the hardest hit is North Tyneside, a part of the

country with higher than average unemployment, where there was a 23% drop in the number of applications to university this summer.'

1.5.2 The Observer article formed the background to a motion considered and agreed by Council at its meeting on 29 November 2012, in the following terms:

'That this Council is seriously concerned with the recent news *, which indicates that university applicants from North Tyneside have shrunk by a staggering 23%. Council requests the Strategic Director of CYPL to produce an initial report on the circumstances of such a reduction and a proposed action plan to reverse this massive decline.'

This report is provided in response to that motion.

1.5.3 Whilst this drop is clearly of concern, further information is required to secure a full understanding of the data. It is worth noting that the report is split by Parliamentary constituencies (the reference to "North Tyneside" in the article being to the parliamentary constituency of North Tyneside) so does not cover the entire local authority area; Tynemouth constituency saw a 14% drop in numbers; the local authority as a whole saw an 18% drop which was the 13th biggest drop in the country.

1.5.4 The data used is **applications to university** and represents the choices made by young people. Therefore it is significant to note that:

- each young person can make up to 5 applications, but not all exercise this choice
- the average for the region is not known;
- the data does not include any applications after 30th June known as 'clearing';
- the data does not represent **acceptances** to universities;
- the data does not include numbers of young people who may be studying higher level qualifications through different routes, for example apprenticeships.

1.5.5 Nationally there has been a 9% drop in the number of applications and the North East region has seen a 13% drop. Attached in Appendix 1 is a table showing the figures for Local Authorities in the North East region.

When considering the actual numbers of applications, North Tyneside has the 5th highest number in the North East region for 2012, which is the same ranking as in 2011. If we then compare the rate against the size of the borough population, North Tyneside has the highest rates in both years, with 109 applications per 100 population in 2011, decreasing to 89 applications per 100 population in 2012. In 2011 the rate had increased significantly from previous years and therefore may have been unusually high.

1.5.6 Preliminary discussions have taken place with headteachers and students to investigate the reasons why young people may not wish to apply to university currently. Anecdotal evidence would suggest a range of causes for the fall in numbers. A proportion of students have:

- A preference to stay in the region and therefore apply for a smaller number of places;
- A concern about the cost of tuition fees;
- A preference to pursue a career through the apprenticeship or other vocational route;
- A preference to go directly into employment and pursue training at a later date.

1.5.7 A more in-depth study to fully establish the cause of the reduced numbers will need to be carried out to gain a fuller understanding of the detail. However it should be noted that, according to DfE data for 2009-10 released in July 2012, 58% of students from North Tyneside engaged in Key Stage 5 learning, progressed into Higher Education destinations. This compares favourably with the national rate of 52%.

1.5.8 Action taken so far:

A range of strategies and actions have been put in place, as follows:

- The Children, Young People and Learning Executive Board have agreed to provide strategic leadership to establish the most effective methods of addressing this challenge and monitor progress. Progression to higher education including to the Russell Group universities is a key indicator on which they will measure their success.
- Secondary schools have been alerted to the decline in numbers through the 14 – 19 Partnership arrangements and Secondary Headteachers Meetings, in order to provide more detail regarding the position for individual schools.
- The Schools, Learning and Skills team is working closely with post 16 providers to establish current university application rates.
- The Schools, Learning and Skills team is ensuring that schools are well supported in communicating the advantages of a university education to young people, including those currently in primary schools, and their parents and carers. An officer with responsibility for Higher Education Pathways will provide targeted support where numbers have fallen significantly.

1.5.9 Next Steps:

The next steps are detailed in the Action Plan attached as Appendix 2 which will include further analysis to establish the number of young people who have **completed** their first year of undergraduate study.

1.6 Decision options:

Council is asked to note the content of this report.

1.7 Reasons for recommended option:

There are no decision options in this report.

1.8 Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Table illustrating the number of applications in the North East Region
Appendix 2 – University Applications Action Plan

1.9 Contact officers:

Jean Griffiths, Head of Schools, Learning and Skills, tel. 0191 643 8782
Anthony Gollings, Financial Business Manager, tel. 0191 643 8071

1.10 Background information:

The following background information has been used in the compilation of the report and is available for inspection at the office of the author:

(1) The source of the data quoted in section 1.5.7 is Department for Education (DfE) and is released to local authorities annually.

(2) The source of the data in Appendix 1 is UCAS (Universities & Colleges Admission Service). This data is not routinely available to local authorities. It is in the public domain as it was used to answer a Parliamentary Question then referred to in the press.

PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING

2.1 Finance and other resources

There are no additional financial implications arising from this report. The milestones contained within the Action Plan can be delivered through existing Council and School budgets.

2.2 Legal

There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

2.3 Consultation/community engagement

2.3.1 Internal consultation

The matters contained in the report have been discussed with the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning, headteachers, and school focus groups. Information from these discussions have informed the actions set out in 1.5.8 of this report

2.3.2 External consultation

This item has been raised at the North Tyneside 14-19 Learning Partnership and is an ongoing piece of work being considered by the group. The group will agree and action any relevant points from the Action Plan to be addressed.

2.4 Human rights

There are no human rights implications directly arising from this report.

2.5 Equalities and diversity

There are no equality and diversity implications directly arising from this report.

2.6 Risk management

There are no specific operational risks directly arising from this report.

2.7 Crime and disorder

There are no crime and disorder implications directly arising from this report.

2.8 Environment and sustainability

There are no environment and sustainability implications directly arising from this report.

PART 3 - SIGN OFF

- Chief Executive X
- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s) X
- Chief Finance Officer x
- Monitoring Officer x
- Strategic Manager (Policy, Performance, Partnerships and Communication) x
- Strategic Director x

Report author:

Jean Griffiths, Head of Schools, Learning and Skills

Appendix One

Local Authority	June 30 deadline 2011 mainscheme choices		June 30 deadline 2012 mainscheme choices		Percentage change from 2011
	Number	Rate per 100 population age 17-19	Number	Rate per 100 population age 17-19	
North Tyneside	7,464	109.3	6,108	89.4	-18.2
Darlington	3,620	97.0	3,243	86.9	-10.4
Northumberland	10,745	99.0	9,376	86.4	-12.7
Hartlepool	3,363	89.5	2,913	77.5	-13.4
Stockton-on-Tees	6,842	85.3	5,868	73.2	-14.2
Redcar and Cleveland	4,334	81.1	3,809	71.3	-12.1
Sunderland	9,144	81.8	7,806	69.8	-14.6
South Tyneside	4,795	84.0	3,978	69.7	-17.0
Gateshead	5,750	77.8	5,006	67.7	-12.9
Middlesbrough	4,338	67.7	4,166	65.1	-4.0
County Durham	14,521	67.7	13,410	62.6	-7.7
Newcastle upon Tyne	9,815	60.0	8,319	50.8	-15.2