

REPORT TO: Education & Children's Services Committee

MEETING DATE: 10 June 2025

BY: Executive Director – Education & Children's Services

SUBJECT: Positive School Leaver Destinations 2023/2024

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update the Committee on the current School Leaver Destination Return report (SLDR) and Participation Measure, including an overview of the interventions implemented to sustain and improve East Lothian Council (ELC) positive destinations.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the significant proactive work currently underway to support improved outcomes for learners leading to positive destinations.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 A glossary has been created to explain the acronyms contained within this committee report (Appendix 1).
- 3.2 The initial destination of school leavers' data (SLDR) is used by schools and Education Authorities across Scotland to monitor progress in improving the proportion of school leavers into positive and sustained destinations.
- 3.3 The data for initial post school destinations (SLDR) referred to in this report is taken from the February 2025 release of the senior phase benchmarking tool, Insight. The data provides information on the outcomes for young people as recorded in October 2024, approximately three to ten months after leaving school.
- 3.4 The data on initial post-school destinations for 2023/24 was reported nationally and published by the Scottish Government on 25th February

2025: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2025/02/summary-statistics-for-attainment-and-initial-leaver-destinations-no-7-2025-edition/documents/summary-statistics-for-attainment-and-initial-leaver-destinations-no-7-2025-edition/summary-statistics-for-attainment-and-initial-leaver-destinations-no-7-2025-edition/govscot%3Adocument/2023%2B-%2B24%2BOutcomes%2BPublication%2B-%2BInitial%2B-%2BReport%2B-%2BV2.pdf>

- 3.5 This report compares East Lothian initial school leaver destinations (SLDR) with the Virtual Comparator and the National Establishment (i.e. national average). Figures are provided in most cases for both the national average and the Virtual Comparator, however, the Virtual Comparator is seen as the key benchmark for helping schools and authorities understand their strengths and areas for improvement. The Virtual Comparator takes the characteristics of each pupil in East Lothian and matches them to 10 similar pupils from schools in other local authorities across Scotland.
- 3.6 This report will explore how the Education Authority has performed over the three-year period since 2021/22 to 2023/24, in relation to the national average and the Virtual Comparator. The main highlights for East Lothian in 2023/24 are provided below -

Summary of Results for East Lothian 2023-2024:

- Our initial Positive Destinations Report (SLDR) for the 2023/24 cohort was 94.5% (a reduction of 1.8% on 2022/23) against a national picture of 95.7%. Initial positive destinations in East Lothian for 2022/23 was 96.3% (National 95.9%), 2021/22 was 95.6% (National 95.7%). An analysis of the recent statistics shows 3.1% of the young people in this leaver cohort are 'unemployed not seeking', which includes those unavailable due to ill health and those who are economically inactive. This is the largest percentage ever recorded for East Lothian in this category. Changes elsewhere are minimal and include 0.3% increase in Higher Education, 2% increase in Training, 2.6% reduction in Further Education and 0.7% reduction in Employment. Despite the slight reduction in employment, East Lothian continues to maintain a much higher trend of young people moving into employment (6% higher) versus that of the national picture.
- Staff within East Lothian Works (ELW), in partnership with colleagues within Skills Development Scotland (SDS) have followed up with all leavers from the 2023/24 cohort. Publication of the follow up statistics is expected during June 2025. This relates to sustained destinations at a point 6 months beyond leaving school. Analysis has taken place to understand the story behind the SLDR reduction, the most significant change has been the 'unemployed not seeking' cohort which has been attributed to the negative impact of Covid. All young people have been offered a range of supports from ELW and SDS in order to support them into a positive destination.
- Our current Annual Participation Measure (APM) measures the proportion of 16-19 year olds participating in education, training or employment. Currently the APM recorded in August 2024 is 94.6% a decrease of 0.3% (94.9%) on the 2023 statistic. Whilst East Lothian remains above the national rate, which was 92.7%, the stretch aim for 2025/26 is 96.6%. The

interactive SDS Annual Participation Measure report can be found here <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/publications-statistics/statistics/annual-participation-measure>

- East Lothian is higher than the national average for all age ranges; Age 16: ELC 99.2% National 99.1%; Age 17: ELC 97.0% National 95.5%; Age 18: ELC 92.6% National 90.4%; Age 19: 88.8% National 85.3%.
- 3.7 East Lothian Works continues to work in collaboration with all ELC secondary schools to deliver a range of certificated qualifications to senior phase young people, ranging from SQA Level 4 - Level 6 and across several vocational areas.
- 3.8 Our Foundation Apprenticeship (FA) programme in session 2023/24 included Accountancy, Business, IT Software, Scientific Technologies and Social Services Children and Young People. These work-based pathways, delivered in partnership with schools, college, training providers and employers continued to be offered across ELC for both 1 and 2 academic year durations. By offering multiple delivery durations, these can be selected by young people across the entirety of the senior phase. Pupil numbers remain high from 2023/24, presenting around 140 young people across the various vocational areas, coupled with a further 120 students for session 2024/2025-26. The FA qualification offers certification at SCQF Level 6, the equivalent to a Higher.
- 3.9 During academic session 2023/24, 43 young people achieved an SCQF Level 4/5 award in Construction Crafts delivered by our partners The Ridge, alongside 7 young people obtaining SCQF Level 4 in Rural Skills. Additionally, our newly established placed based partnership with Edinburgh College delivering certificated courses from our Regional Construction Skills Academy within The Wallyford Learning Campus offered 12 young people an opportunity to achieve a full SCQF Level 4 in Construction Crafts. For young people transitioning post-school, Edinburgh College delivered an Edinburgh College certificated 'Introduction to Construction Course' for 16 young people. This provided young people with the opportunity to try out multiple trade areas, including blockwork, painting and decorating, roofing, and joinery. All young people successfully completed this course and were guaranteed a progression pathway into Edinburgh College to a full-time course.
- 3.10 East Lothian Works staff supported 18 young people to undertake the 'QMU Creates' programme during 2023/24, a collaboration with East Lothian Council's arts service and Queen Margaret University giving young people an experience in film making, music and the arts. A further 10 young people achieved a National Progression Award (NPA) Level 5 in Long Hair and Make Up, offering a full award and immersive insight into the Hair and Beauty industry.
- 3.11 Our ongoing delivery of Employability+, an employability programme for senior phase pupils with ASN who were approaching their school leaving

date was extended to 52 pupils. Staff supported young people with skills identification and development, alongside exploration of post-school destinations. This programme was also complemented by delivering 14 SCQF Level 6 qualifications in Emergency First Aid at Work, and 14 SCQF Level 4 awards for First Aid for Mental Health Awareness. Both qualifications are delivered in partnership with St Andrew First Aid and are industry recognised.

- 3.12 In partnership with Edinburgh College, over 180 East Lothian senior phase pupils attained qualifications from the School to College Partnership (SCP) offer during 2023/24. Attending courses on a Tuesday and Thursday afternoon within Edinburgh College campuses, East Lothian students successfully engaged in a variety of certified courses, including, Automotive, Professional Cookery, Criminology, Early Learning and Childcare, Health and Social Care, Film, Media and Sound Production and Games Development Design. To support a sustained college destination post-school, ELW delivered a college transition support package to 18 East Lothian young people during session 2023/24.
- 3.13 In response to pupil demand, Edinburgh College has expanded their placed-based delivery within The Wallyford Learning Campus. During session 2024/25, we have introduced a senior phase SCQF Level 4 course comprising of Automotive and Mechanical and Electrical Engineering. 'Future Skills' will use these disciplines, alongside renewables, culminating in pupils building a green powered car. For post-school young people, Edinburgh College have delivered a Pre-Apprenticeship Fabrication and Welding course, informed by labour market intelligence and industry insight in response to the skills gaps. Furthermore, a pilot SCQF Level 5 Construction Crafts has commenced for 16 young people as a direct progression pathway for those completing 'Intro to Construction' or SCP Level 4.
- 3.14 ELW has also allocated funding to employers through:
- UKSPF ERI (Employer Recruitment Incentive) £110,666.63 was allocated in 2024/25, which created 28 opportunities. For 2025/26 £100,000 is available to create new job opportunities.
 - Parental ERI (Employer Recruitment Incentive) created 7 opportunities in 2024/25 totalling £39,000. For 2025/26 £60,000 is available to create new job opportunities.
- 3.15 The Parental Employability (PES) Team supported 51 parents to undertake Paid Work Experience placements in the following roles: Administration, Classroom Assistant, Early Years, Facilities Management and Waste Management. Parents working with staff gained 86 accredited qualifications to further their skills and employment prospects. Throughout 24/25 there were 43 job outcomes from parents engaging with the PES Team.

- 3.16 During 24/25, the Income Maximisation service for East Lothian Works received 110 referrals, a 4% increase from last year, 70 of whom were parents. 52 parents benefited from financial gains totalling £183,536.79 which is a 56% increase on last year's total. A significant part of this has been parents supported to access both Adult and Child disability benefits. This increase in household income, helps make part-time work a sustainable option for those with increased caring responsibilities.

Next Steps

- 3.17 Plans for session 2025/26 are underway with confirmation from Edinburgh College to sustain all courses delivered in 2024/25. This is in addition to introducing a National Certificate (NC) Built Environment to young people in the senior phase who wish to achieve qualification within this sector, equivalent to a Higher. Direct progression is guaranteed by Edinburgh College into a full time HNC course within Architectural Technician, Civil Engineering or Professional Construction Management. This course will also act as a solid foundation for those wishing to progress into a traditional trades pathway. Also, for session 2025/26 a Skills for Work Energy SCQF Level 5 will be offered to senior phase young people. Acknowledging the expansion of green skills and the renewables sectors, this will provide an introductory course to school age pupils.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct policy implications associated with this report.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – All school-age activities are predicated upon the continuation of existing core funding being allocated to East Lothian Works. Any reduction in funding will lead to a decrease in capacity and therefore a drop in the service's ability to continue with existing activities and interventions. All post-school activity is reliant upon external grant funding and therefore parameters of activity are dictated by strict grant conditions. External funding fluctuates on an annual basis.
- 6.2 Personnel - Is reliant upon maintenance of existing budget allocations, both core and external.

6.3 Other - None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Glossary

Appendix 2 – School Leaver Destinations 2023/24

AUTHOR'S NAME	Alison Hood
DESIGNATION	Team Manager
CONTACT INFO	ahood@eastlothian.gov.uk
DATE	22/05/2025

Appendix 1

Glossary:

School Leaver Destination Return (SLDR) – Published by Scottish Government, information collated by SDS which relates to school leavers (S4-S6) and their initial destination upon leaving school.

Annual Participation Measure (APM) – Report published by SDS focuses on the education and employment activity of 16-19 year olds over one calendar year, April – March.

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) – Is the national skills agency for Scotland, supporting people and businesses of Scotland to develop and apply their skills.

Education Scotland – Is a Scottish Government executive agency responsible for supporting quality and improvement in Scottish Education.

Curriculum for Excellence (CFE) – Developed over the course of several years to improve and transform Scotland's Education systems, by a more flexible and coherent curriculum from 3-18 years.

Broad General Education (BGE) – Begins in early learning and childcare until the end of S3 (the third year of secondary school).

Foundation Apprenticeship (FA) - Foundation Apprenticeships at SCQF Level 6 provide work-based learning opportunities for learners in their senior phase of secondary education (S4 – S6). The delivery of the qualification is a mixture of classroom and work based learning with employer and forms part of the pupil's timetable alongside their other qualifications such as National 5 and Highers.

No One Left Behind (NOLB) – Is Scottish Government's Employability Strategy to transform employment support in Scotland.

Modern Apprenticeships (MA's) - Is a job which lets people earn a wage and gain an industry-recognised qualification.

Parental Employability Support Fund (PESF) – forming part of the NOLB strategy, this fund is collaboratively managed by Scottish and Local Government, providing dedicated support for low-income families. Taking a holistic Key Worker approach parents are supported to upskill and/or re-train, increasing family income, lifting themselves and their families out of poverty. For 2024/25 this activity will form part of the No One Left Behind employability funding for local authorities.

Appendix 2

School Leaver Destinations 2023/24

School 2023/24	% Employed	% Further Education	% Higher Education	% Voluntary Work	% Personal Skills Development	% Training		% Unemployed Not Seeking	% Unemployed Seeking	% Unknown
Dunbar Grammar School	29.13	16.02	41.75	0.97	0.49	3.88		4.37	2.91	0.49
Virtual Comparator for Dunbar Grammar School	21.94	21.46	47.77	0.73	0.97	3.25		1.99	1.65	0.24
Knox Academy	31.54	19.46	37.58	0.67	2.01	2.68		4.7	1.34	
Virtual Comparator for Knox Academy	24.77	24.03	41.54	0.4	1.28	3.49		1.81	2.35	0.34
Musselburgh Grammar School	30.43	25.3	30.04	0.79	2.77	5.93		2.77	1.98	
Virtual Comparator for Musselburgh Grammar School	24.51	30	35.22	0.47	0.87	3.75		2.41	2.53	0.24
North Berwick High School	18.99	7.82	67.04		0.56	1.68		1.68	2.23	
Virtual Comparator for North Berwick High School	18.21	13.52	64.75	0.61	0.28	1.23		0.5	0.67	0.22
Preston Lodge High School	33.71	19.1	31.46		1.69	5.62		4.49	3.93	
Virtual Comparator for Preston Lodge High School	19.38	26.85	37.58	0.45	1.24	7.58		3.03	3.65	0.22
Ross High School	33.74	21.54	32.11		3.66	5.69		1.22	2.03	
Virtual Comparator for Ross High School	24.92	27.97	35.08	0.73	1.06	4.35		2.72	3.01	0.16

