

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE

26 JULY 2011

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - CHILDREN

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE WORK PLACEMENTS, TRAINEESHIP AND APPRENTICESHIP SCHEMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE LOOKED AFTER OR WERE FORMERLY LOOKED AFTER.

1. Purpose of Report

To provide a progress update on the Council's work placement, traineeship and apprenticeship schemes.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives / Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1. Looked After Children remain a key responsibility for the Council as corporate parents.
- 2.2. Corporate Parenting supports the following corporate and Community Strategy priorities:-
 - Young Voices
 - Healthy Living,
 - New Opportunities.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee provides a vehicle for elected members to consider what needs to be done in relation to, primarily, the well-being and progress of Looked After Children and Young People. It has sought to receive information specifically relating to Looked After Children and the Authority's Corporate Parenting role and has approved schemes in relation to work experience, training and apprenticeships for Looked After Children and former Looked After Children.
- 3.2. The Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee will be aware from previous reports that the chances of young people in public care making successful transition from dependency to self reliance can prove really challenging for some young people unless effective ongoing support is provided to them at this important stage of life. Employment is one area where young care leavers often fair less favorably than non care leavers. For example, 13% of non care leavers are not in employment, training or education (NEET) compared to 30% of care leavers. This can further compound young care leavers' lack of confidence and self-esteem and reduce further the expectations they have of themselves.

- 3.3. The Authority has embraced the opportunity to support its young people leaving care to have access to appropriate development and employment opportunities by encouraging young people to engage in either apprenticeships, traineeships or work experience opportunities. In addition, young people can now access pre placement training through the newly developed “Best Chance Scheme” highlighted previously to the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee on 8th February 2011.
- 3.4. Identifying suitable young people from the considerable number of 16 – 21 year olds who are eligible at any given time by age has proved to be time consuming and resource intensive. Data collated in the latter part of 2010 and to date, has been analysed to both identify eligible young people and to explore how to improve data capture methods. Young people who have been identified and continue to be identified for the various schemes are those who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) and therefore more likely to benefit from the various apprenticeship, traineeship and work experience schemes.
- 3.5. In August 2010, the local authority bid for, and was successful in securing, inclusion in the “Best Chance Programme” which is a joint funded initiative supported by the then Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), Business in the Community (BitC) and leading businesses. This programme provides a structured and holistic activity which aims to work alongside the local authority to identify suitable young people, provide them with pre placement training, match their specific interests and abilities to local businesses and to support and mentor the young people while on the programme.

4. Current Situation / Proposal:

- 4.1. The work experience placements previously secured continue to be available to young people and provide a range of core work experience opportunities for young people who fall into the NEET category. Placements are also available for those who may have options ahead of them such as employment or training, but who need some experience in order to build confidence and add weight to further education or employment applications. Whilst there has been a successful campaign to secure the providers of these work experience placements, it is apparent that a wider range of providers may be needed in order to expand the range of meaningful and interesting work experience options for young people.
- 4.2. The number of young people eligible for the various schemes can fluctuate slightly month on month dependent on the number of young people open to the Leaving Care Service and who are classed as NEET. The figures used to inform this report are those obtained as of the 31 May 2011. The same methodology has been used in this report as in the previous reports. Namely, identification of all potentially eligible young people on an age criteria. Those already in employment, education or training were removed as were those living out of county/moving away, those involved in care proceedings, in custody, full time young parents, drug dependent, or suffering with ill health or physical injuries. This left just 18 eligible young people, slightly higher than the 15 eligible in the previous reporting period. This low figure reinforces the very positive message from the previous report that a significant number of young people are in meaningful activities, such as employment, education and training. A smaller number are unable to engage for well documented reasons.

4.3. Best Change Programme:

4.3.1. The involvement in the Best Change Programme commenced late in February 2011 and involved interviews of 8 eligible young people from the (then) 15 eligible. Five were successful at interview and subsequently engaged in a two day pre-placement training event. All 5 young people commenced their two week work experience placements at the following employment settings;

- Cowlin Construction
- Castle Bingo
- Sony – receptionist
- Sony
- Leadbitter in Brackla

One young person was unable to complete the two weeks placement due to a family bereavement.

4.3.2. Feedback from the Business in the Community Team and the work experience providers has been very positive with one young person being offered an extended work experience opportunity of five months at Cowlin Construction. A draft report has been attached which will feature in the Sony internal news briefing (Appendix 1). Members of the leaving care team have continued to work closely with the initiative and this has enabled them to consider current practices within the service and to look to possible improvements in the preparation and support of young people engaging in work experience initiatives. As a result, a small focus group made up of after care staff and human resource colleagues will be meeting shortly to discuss how better to prepare and support young people to engage on the various schemes available.

4.4. Traineeship:

4.4.1. The successful applicant to the traineeship opportunity commenced her placement on 10th January 2011 in the Restorative Justice Anti-Bullying Initiative, located within the Bridgend Youth Offending Service. As with any traineeship, there have been lessons learned from the placement which will help to shape future initiatives. The young person has provided her own report, which gives an insight into her experience and achievement. This can be found at Appendix 2 of this report. The placement has developed further in recent months and in order to continue to meet this young person's needs and to maximise her opportunities, the placement has now been transferred to the youth service in partnership with the aftercare service. Whilst a primary aim of this traineeship was to provide a young person with a valid work experience and an opportunity to work towards achieving recognised qualifications in either youth work or youth justice, there have been additional personal achievements which this young person has captured well in her own words:

"I have found that I am more independent and know a lot more about the "workplace" and how that works with all its policies and procedures. I have moved on in my life I am now living independently and in a new flat which is good."

4.5. Work Experience:

- 4.5.1. The existing core work experience placements remain available for eligible young people open to the after care service. Efforts to increase options are being maintained but in line, more appropriately, with the identified preferences and needs of the young people. It is anticipated that a more tailored approach would yield greater take up of work experience opportunities. In the first five months of this calendar year, 3 placements have been secured for young people with the existing work placements in addition to those on the other schemes. These have included a long term placement commencing on in January 2011 with the grounds maintenance department. Two further placements are pending but both are subject to criminal records bureau checks (CRB) and are with Garw Valley Leisure Centre and Bridgend catering services. Efforts to expand placement choice needs to be carefully balanced with identified needs and to avoid a position where there is a glut of placement choice but limited young people to access these resulting in placements not being used and providers withdrawing from the scheme.
- 4.5.2. Efforts to identify suitable young people for the various schemes has been time consuming and have featured only the young people currently open to the after care service. Whilst this has proved successful in the main, there is recognition that this activity needs to be streamlined and reviewed. To that end, two new areas are to be addressed.
- 4.5.3. Firstly data capture methods are to be refined. Discussions with the information management team has helped to devise simple data capture activities which will considerably improve the process, reducing staff time in collating and sorting manually lists of young people.
- 4.5.4. Secondly, there is recognition that activity on identifying young people who would benefit from engaging in the range of work experience, traineeship and apprenticeship opportunities now needs to be expanded to include young people who are currently looked after and who are due to be discharged from care. In care and pathway planning options for these young people for training and work experience need to be explored more fully, utilising as part of the planning process the schemes already in existence. This should involve the safeguarding teams, fostering service and the independent reviewing officers (IRO) to enable proactive planning and to identify earlier potentially eligible young care leavers for the various schemes.

4.6. Apprenticeships:

- 4.6.1. In the previous reports, efforts to secure an apprenticeship placement have been outlined. Unfortunately to date this has not been successful. As Members will be aware, one of the drivers behind the establishment of the apprenticeship programme was for the Council to offer at least one apprenticeship placement to a looked after child leaving the carer of the council i.e. fulfillment of the Corporate Parenting Role. Building on the experience of previous efforts and the approach of the Business in the Community colleagues, from our HR and aftercare team are now working more closely to identify potential apprenticeship opportunities but also considering more effective ways to prepare and support young people being considered in order to maximise potential for success. Currently there are five

potential apprenticeships due to go out to advert. These include two in the near future in the grounds maintenance section and three in the Highways Department.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.

None

6. Equality Impact Assessment.

The initiatives described in the report are relevant to the Authority's general and specific duties to promote equality and eliminate discrimination but here are no negative equality implications.

7. Financial Implications.

The local authority contribution of £5,000 for the Business in the Community Project was secured from the Aftercare Budget and was matched with a grant of equal amounts from the Welsh Government for the period 2010/11. The funding for the Traineeship is £210 weekly and will be jointly met by the Youth Service and Aftercare budget.

8. Recommendation.

It is recommended that the Committee notes this report and the progress that has been made with regard to the creation of work placement opportunities within the Local Authority for young people who are, or who have been in the care of this authority.

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Background documents

Previous progress report to Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee on the work placements, traineeship and apprenticeship schemes dated 8 February 2011.