

**BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING CABINET COMMITTEE**

**17 JANUARY 2012**

**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, 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 continues 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.
- 3.4. Identifying suitable young people from the considerable number of 16 – 21 year olds who are eligible at any given time is a time consuming and resource intensive process. However the Aftercare Team together with Business Support and Management Information colleagues have worked together to improve methods of data capture. This has enabled continued improvement in the process, reducing time spent on collating the information and has led to more easily accessible information. This has aided the service to identify those who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) more quickly which in turn ensures eligible young people are considered for the various apprenticeship, traineeship and work experience schemes.

#### **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.
- 4.2. The number of young people eligible for the various schemes fluctuates month on month and year on year dependent on the number of young people open to the Leaving Care Service at any given time and who are classed as NEET. The figures used to inform this report are those obtained in 12<sup>th</sup> December 2011 and are taken from the 155 young people open to the service. In the last reporting period this figure was slightly lower at 128.
- 4.3. The same methodology to identify young people who are NEET 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 reporting period has identified a significant number of NEET, 30 in total compared to 18 last reporting period and 15 the period before that. Whilst the figure has increased, this could be due to the higher number of young people open to the service in this period and improved data capture methodology. Although the figure of 30 is a significant increase, when taken from the number open to the service (155) this continues to reinforce the very positive message from the previous report that the majority of young people in Bridgend are in meaningful activities, such as employment, education and training.
- 4.4. Traineeship:
  - 4.4.1. The successful applicant to the traineeship opportunity commenced her placement on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011 in the Restorative Justice Anti-Bullying Initiative, located within the Bridgend Youth Offending Service. This initiative is continuing until 31<sup>st</sup>

March 2012. This has been a significant opportunity for the young person in question and she has noted positive aspects of '.....gaining a lot of experience, a lot of knowledge and confidence and my self-esteem has grown dramatically....'. As a component of the programme/traineeship, the young person has remained conscientious and diligent throughout in undertaking her day to day duties and maximising the opportunities being afforded her.

4.4.2. As a result of a small amount of funding being available via Cymorth/YOS, an additional traineeship opportunity was made available to another young person at the beginning of November 2011. This was also linked to the Restorative Justice Anti-Bullying initiative and is being funded up to the end of March 2012. Although this is only fifth week of the traineeship opportunity, (at the time of writing), the successful young person has already made the most of the opportunity being made available to her and alongside her responsibilities as a mother to a young child. In the initial week of the traineeship, the young person followed through a basic skills test and achieved 100% on mathematics and 90% on English.

4.4.3. In relation to both of the above traineeships, the After Care Service is hoping to explore ongoing funding opportunities in order to continue with the respective programmes for the two young people in question – adding to their personal development, wellbeing, transition to adulthood and promoting their sense of becoming valued members of society.

#### 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. The take up of this initiative remains consistent and again three young people have benefitted from opportunities in this reporting period. One young person secured a work experience with Cleaning Operatives, undertaking administrative tasks. One young man has now completed a short work experience placement with Building Maintenance. This opportunity was not as successful as others due to the limited commitment and changes in the young person's personal circumstances and therefore the placement was brought to a close. However the young man is able to recommence the placement at a later date should he choose to do so. A third young person has continued his 'voluntary work placement' with the Parks Division based at Bryncethin. This has been very successful to date and the young man, at his own request having now increased the number of days he spends on 'voluntary placement' from one day per week to two days per week. Discussions are taking place about a further increase in the number of days the young man spends on placement, to formalise the current arrangement until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012, with the young person in question then being given the opportunity of applying for full-time/paid seasonal employment.

4.5.2. Efforts to identify suitable young people for the various schemes continue to be highly 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 have been explored, one more successfully than the other.

- 4.5.3. Firstly, close working with business support colleagues has resulted in better data capture, reducing staff time in collating and sorting manually lists of young people. The new process was launched early in December 2011 so the results are therefore yet to be realised.
- 4.5.4. Secondly, it is recognised that there would be advantages in identifying young people earlier (when still in the latter stages of being looked after) who may be eligible for work experience, traineeship and apprenticeship opportunities. However, there has been limited time and resources available to the service and what has been available has been utilised to provide opportunities for existing young care leavers. However, it is planned to involve more fully the independent reviewing officers (IRO) to identify earlier potentially eligible young care leavers for the various schemes through more proactive care and pathway planning.
- 4.5.5. Further but limited opportunities and developments have been achieved in the last six months which include a volunteering opportunity for one young woman in the Just Ask project and another has been linked with BAVO to secure a work experience opportunity. Both initiatives will be explored further in the next reporting period when it is hoped more information will be available.
- 4.5.6. In addition to the two new developments above, two further opportunities appear promising. Firstly, one young man has been linked with the Coastal Project to increase access to training and, secondly, the Bridge Mentoring Plus Scheme has recently advised that they are now able to offer 20 day supported work experience placements for young people in the borough. Possible eligible young people are being identified from within the NEET cohort.

#### 4.6. Apprenticeships:

- 4.6.1. Unfortunately, due to current budgetary constraints, there have been no further developments regarding apprenticeships being made available to young people leaving the care of the council. It is, however, planned to revisit this with senior officers in the new Year. There is recognition of the need to explore this further as Members will be aware that 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. This accords with the UK government commitment published in *'New Opportunities: Fair Chances for the Future'*, published in January 2008 which stated that 'Society's aspirations for children in care should be no less than parents have for their own children'

### 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 funding for traineeships is £210 weekly and will be met by the Youth Service and Aftercare budgets.

## **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 28 February 2011 and 26 July 2011.